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THE CHICAGO LEDGER

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GREETING!
To all dear children everywhere, to every human creature in the land, the Ledger sends a Happy Christmas Greeting. May you have joy and health and live long and love much and be loved in return. The Ledger.
ANDRE BOWLES

HIS CHRISTMAS DREAM

The Mysterious Cousin;

Or, THE TRAGEDY OF A NIGHT

By J. M. Merrill

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CHAPTER XVII.

DONALD HUDDLESTONE had been a week in the jail at Washtenong, where he was held without bail to answer at the next term of court for the wilful murder of Gideon Lake.

Minwaring had engineered the affair without consulting his friends. None of them were very much surprised, however. Gregerson sought the old man in his den after the arrest and learned all his plans.

"I have convincing evidence of his guilt, Volney," declared old Karl. "The infernal machine did the business and we shall soon see the villain where he belongs, in the penitentiary for life."

The land-cruiser had not the enthusiastic faith of his friend. There were some things in connection with the case which puzzled him. Since his rather warm encounter with the lawyer on the day of his return, Gregerson had been taking stock of past events and he could not bring himself to believe as strongly in Don's guilt as he once had done. He did not like the man, although there were some very winning qualities about him.

He was winning considerable prominence at the bar, and was considered a coming man. This arrest was sure to blight the poor fellow's prospects, and after a way Gregerson more than half-regretted it.

Lettice did not again force her company upon him. He had not seen her since the fall of her "nobleman," nor did he attempt to do so. Miss Iderman was considerably in evidence all the time. She was gayer than ever after the fall of Huddlestone. She smiled with equal suavity upon Gregerson and old Tim. The latter came often to the house, and was seen much in company with the bewitching Californian.

"The old cuss seems to have lost his wits," said Karl, speaking of the money-lender. "He scarcely notices this trouble that has befallen his nephew. I do believe he fancies himself in love."

"In love? At his age?"

"Well, why not?" said the stolid superintendent. "I tell you, I have about lost my own heart to that girl. She's a fine young woman and no mistake. She has bewitched old Tim, or I'm an idiot. If I were young again—ah, if I only were!"

Gregerson started and flushed to his brows. He, too, was thinking of Miss Iderman. The months of her stay at Pine Tree Hill had been very gay with the sunshine of her presence, the geniality of her infectious laugh.

Gregerson got up and took a turn about the room.

"I leave it all to you," he said as a finality. He had glanced from the window to note that Miss Iderman was tripping down the steps, with a driving whip in her hand. Her cheeks were glowing with health and the bracing October air. She was a woman worth while and no mistake. Even these old men were compelled to sit up and take notice.

A man was leading Black Bess from the stable as the girl came out. She greeted Gregerson with a smile as he stepped from the office.

"We see so little of you lately," she said, going suddenly grave. "I was speaking to my cousin about it, but she seemed dead to anything but the man in prison. Do you know, she refuses to believe him guilty."

"Has she talked to you of him, Florence?"

"Oh, yes, he's continually on her mind. She has been twice to the jail to see him."

"Indeed!"

A cold iciness struck the young man's vitals. Miss Iderman invited him to ride with her and he gallantly accepted.

"I am going to Washtenong to see a lawyer; it's my cousin's wish. The Huddlestones will make a strenuous fight."

"No doubt of it," agreed the disturbed young man. "Don has brought this upon himself, however."

"You think he is guilty?"

"I beg to reserve my opinion," said he with a mirthless laugh. "I may be called on the jury, you see, and—well, I prefer to not express my opinion just at present."

"That will please Lettice. She thinks you are deeply prejudiced where Don Huddlestone is concerned."

Gregerson frowned and bit his lip. Lettice's opinions ought to be of little moment after what had passed. They were entering a strip of cedars when the land-cruiser broke forth with a sudden declaration. The presence of Florence, with her delightful personality, added to the knowledge that all the men, young and old, were quite gone where she was concerned decided him to act.

He was holding her hand when the words of love, his desire to make her Mrs. Gregerson, came with torrid force from his lips.

"I feel extremely honored, Mr. Gregerson," said she, with a tinkling laugh, "very greatly honored indeed. I have admired you very much, and it grieves me to say that you speak one day too late."

"Too late? I don't understand. Surely if you care for me——"

"Oh, yes, indeed, I care very much for you, Volney," and her voice trembled perceptibly. "I did not know, you see—perhaps, had you spoken sooner——"

"But what difference——"

"All the difference in the world, dear Mr. Gregerson. I accepted Mr. Timothy Huddlestone only last evening. I can't very well marry two men, can I?" There was simple girlish innocence in the odd query that at another time would have brought a smile to his lips.

"But that man!" exclaimed Gregerson in horror. "He is old enough to be your father!"

"Yes, to be my grandfather, yet for all that he is kindly and very nice; and he is wealthy—the richest man in Orton County; he told me so himself."

"And the biggest scoundrel!" growled Gregerson.

An amused laugh answered him. She seemed hardly to realize as he did the enormity of the sin she was about to commit. He was in no mood for moralizing. He might have attempted to break her decision, but he would not. He was done with women from this time forth.

"I hope you and your granddad husband may be happy," was his parting shot as he leaped from the buggy at the intersection of a street. She only smiled her acknowledgement and drove swiftly away. Gregerson stood on the corner watching the fascinating creature out of sight. A big sigh escaped him as he turned to walk uptown.

He had been most unfortunate in his ove affairs as the reader will admit. His neart was not quite broken, however. His mind dwelt continually on the man in Orton County jail, and on the midnight adventure which had befallen him in the big woods some weeks earlier. Was Don Huddlestone really guilty? This was a haunting thought as the land-cruiser walked thoughtfully forward.

Karl Minwaring had a caller soon after the departure of the land-cruiser; no less a person than Timothy Huddlestone, the wily money-lender. The old superintendent knew that he was in for a time. Despite all his figuring Minwaring had found no way out of sacrificing the bulk of the Lake fortune to the greed of this tightfist, who had drawn the late lumberman so cunningly into the meshes of his net.

"Sit down, Mr. Huddlestone," said Karl as pleasantly as possible.

The money-lender did so. His face wore an amazingly benign aspect as he sat, bent forward in the office chair, his twinkling little eyes fixed on the face of the other.

"Bent upon some new deviltry, no doubt," thought old Karl.

"I am come for a final settlement of the affairs of the late Gideon Lake," said Timothy, thrusting his bony hand into a side pocket. "I wish everything settled today."

"I hardly think it can be done so quickly," began Minwaring.

"Easiest thing in the world," chuckled Timothy, laying his papers on the table before his host. "There has been much crimination and recrimination between us, Mr. Minwaring, and——"

"All because of your meanness," broke out the other, ready to defend his own position to the bitter end. "I have made you fair offers, and you have refused them. I can see only one way out, and that is for you to go ahead and do your worst. One thing look out for, though."

"Eh; what is that?"

"See that you don't find yourself behind prison bars with your rascally nephew."

"But, my dear man, I had nothing to do with that scrape. If my nevvy did, let him stand the consequences. I have something else to look after now. I am going on my honeymoon trip."

"What!" almost yelled old Karl.

"Don't get excited, man," chuckled old Timothy. "'Tain't often a man of my age gets love-cracked, but it's a fact this time. I've sold all my available property; got fifty thousand in ready cash, and am going to vamoose this country. Southern California, her orange groves,, rich valleys and delightful sunshine appeals to me. With a pretty girl for a bride I reckon 'tain't too late for an old man to be happy—hey?"

The loud chuckle following his astounding statement revealed the money-lender's shrunken jaws and ragged teeth, to the last molar. Old Karl sat silent from very amazement. His visitor proceeded to open his papers. They proved to be mortgages on the most of the Lake land descriptions.

"Now look 'em over, Mr. Minwaring."

The superintendent did as requested.

"Why," he exclaimed, looking at his caller in amazement, "these are the papers you threatened to foreclose, and they are all cancelled. Who paid this debt, Mr. Huddlestone?"

The astonishment on the face of the speaker was genuine.

"Nobody," said Huddlestone.

"How, then——"

"It's this way," chuckled the old man, thumping the table with one bony fist. "She wouldn't have me without I made her cousin and aunt good and sound so far as the Lake property was concerned. When a man's in love he will do anything for his girl, won't he?"

"Maybe he will," dazedly articulated stolid old Karl.

"She said for me to cancel every debt against the Lakes and she'd marry me for good and all. It come like pulling teeth, but I've did it, and now you can burn the papers if you like—eighty thousand gone in smoke jest for the love of a girl! She's wuth it, though, Karl, she's wuth it," and the old rascal laughed uproarously.

"Everything cancelled but that life insurance——"

"Oh, here, I near forgot all about that," and Timothy Huddlestone drew out a long wallet. From this he extracted a thin green strip of bond paper. This proved to be a draft on a Gardenfield bank for twenty thousand dollars, payable to Mrs. Lydia Lake.

"We got the money from the insurance folks, so this squares that. I must now bid you good-by, Karl. Time is precious. Give my respects to all inquiring friends, and especially to Miss Lettice."

"Are you then really intending to leave the country, Mr. Huddlestone?"

"Sure as gospel."

"But your nephew?"

"Will have to reap the whirlwind of his own sowing. I hope he'll be able to prove himself innocent, but I can't sacrifice another cent for him or anybody else."

"You haven't told me the happy bride's name?" suggested Minwaring.

"Why, who else could it be but Florence, the California red rose," and with a gutteral laugh the old man made for the door.

He opened this, hesitated an instant on the threshold, saying:

"Keep this under your hat till after tomorrow, Karl."

"All right," agreed the delighted superintendent.

The door closed with a bang. Old Karl sat like a statue. His round, wide-set eyes twinkled like those of an owl; his broad jaws were set, while a low, rumbling laugh rolled like distant thunder up from his bosom.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It was the day subsequent to the one closing the last chapter.

Gregerson found himself once more at the village, making his way to the Orton County jail. He had received only that morning astounding news from old Karl, no less an announcement than that the inexplicable Tim Huddlestone had given back to the Lakes all and more than he had robbed them of.

Gregerson was as amazed as had been the administrator. Karl had kept back one part of the old money-lender's motive, however. The fact that it was Lettice's California cousin who had driven the skinflint to do justice, was as yet unknown to our hero of the pine trail.

Don had sent for him and he was going to visit the prisoner at the jail. Gregerson had avoided meeting either Lettice or her cousin within the past twenty-four hours. He would have turned his back on Pine Tree Hill for good had it not been for what old Karl had told him, and also because of Donald's request for an interview.

There was no trouble experienced in entering the jail; the sheriff was courtesy itself.

"I am glad you have come!" exclaimed the prisoner, starting up from his cot as the visitor entered, a half-smile playing over the speaker's thin, dark face. At the same time he held out his hand.

Gregerson accepted this proffer of friendliness without a word.

"You no doubt wonder why I have sent for you, Volney," pursued the prisoner. "It is not for myself that I am at present concerned, but about Uncle Timothy and my clients. The former has been acting queerly of late, and I fear he is losing his mind."

"There may be some reason to suspect that," said Gregerson when he remembered what the old money-lender had done. He kept this from Don, however, not wishing to prejudice anything the prisoner might care to communicate. "I admit my surprise at your sending for me, Mr. Huddlestone, since I have not been your friend."

"I am well aware of that," and Huddlestone smiled rather enigmatically. "Nevertheless I considered you the safest man on the Basshawk to intrust with my secret. You were trailing me that night when I was in the woods?"

"I will not deny it."

"I was sure of it. And you suspected that I was out to hide evidences of a guilt most damnable. In that surmise you were mistaken, old man. I have interested myself very much in this murder case, for, like yourself, I realized from the outset that Gideon Lake had been murdered. I trust I am not tiring you?"

"Not in the least. Please go on with what you have to say," urged Gregerson, whose curiosity was very much excited.

The prisoner sat down on the edge of his cot and indicated a stool for his visitor. Gregerson accepted this manifestation of grim hospitality, and leaned toward Donald, an interested gleam in his eyes.

"I have been on the trail ever since the fatal night of the Lake dance," proceeded the prisoner. "I kept my own counsel, however, since I hardly knew whom to trust. I have had my eye on one personage and have moved accordingly. I had the dice loaded and ready to throw when, unfortunately, old Karl Minwaring sprung his trap and threw me out of the running. That was a most unfortunate move for all concerned."

"No doubt you think so at least."

"And there are others," protested Huddlestone. "I won't discuss that, however, but come right down to business. Will you take up the trail where I left it, Volney?"

"Is this a trick——"

"Nothing of the kind. But, if you have any fears, please consider yourself out. I'll call in another party."

Gregerson hesitated for only a moment.

"Consider me at your service, Donald," he said with ample frankness.

"Thanks, old man."

After a careful glance about Huddlestone asked his visitor for the loan of his jackknife. With this he proceeded to rip open his coat-sleeve and from next the lining he produced several papers. These he laid on the cot and returned Gregerson's knife. A smile rippled the thin face of the prisoner as he opened and examined the papers.

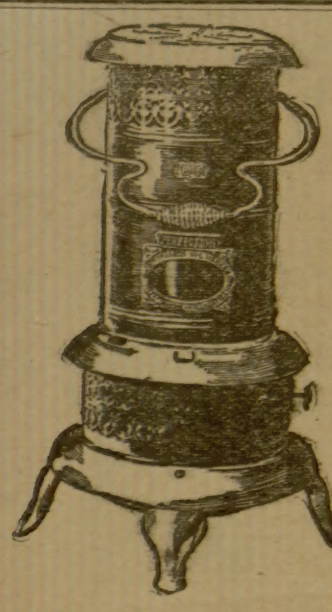
"I was fearful I would be robbed of these before you came," said the prisoner. "These are important papers belonging to the late Gideon Lake, and hidden by his assassin, with a suit of clothes, in the forest near where the murder took place. I have it figured out as to how it all came about.

"The murderer asked Mr. Lake for a ride, and while in conversation with him dealt the fatal blow. A cowardly and revengeful deed you say. It was, and one that must not escape punishment."

From beneath the clothing Mr. Huddlestone produced a small steel hammer, which he passed over to his visitor, with the request that he examine it carefully. Gregerson did so. While passing his hand up and down the handle, a sharp click followed, and a tiny steel arrow shot across the cell, dropping from the iron lining of the wall to the floor.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Donald. "The blamed thing was loaded; I did not know that. It might have harmed you, Volney! I must humbly beg your pardon for being so careless," and the speaker reached over to take the hammer from his visitor's hand. Gregerson drew aside, holding fast to the delicate toy. His face was white, and an awful look filled his eyes. Was this a second attempt made by Don Huddlestone upon his life?

"Another one of your infernal machines, Mr. Huddlestone!" raspingly uttered Gregerson.



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"True, yet not meant for any bad purpose. I lost that hammer a week before the death of Mr. Lake. Do you believe me, Volney?"

"Frankly, I do not," spoke Gregerson with compressed lip and angry eye. "This is but a bold attempt to escape just punishment for your damnable crimes. I shall at once proceed to place this hammer in evidence."

"Against me?"

"Against you, Don Huddlestone."

"You are a coward to take advantage of a helpless prisoner. I sent for you to aid me in the capture of the real murderer. Look at these papers, please, and see if they do not convince you that I mean just what I say."

Dropping the deadly hammer into his pocket, Gregerson proceeded to look over the papers produced in so strange a manner by the prisoner. Once looking them over brought a cry of surprise from the lips of the land-cruiser.

"What do you find, Mr. Gregerson?"

"Why, these are receipts for sums of money paid over by Gideon Lake to Timothy Huddlestone for the purpose of cancelling all indebtedness. Your crafty old uncle has profited by this murder. He meant to secure double pay for his loans, the old scoundrel!"

"True, my uncle is a dishonest rascal; I learned that to my sorrow some time ago," confessed Donald. "I did not know of the existence of these papers till I found them in the cast-off clothing of Mr. Lake's assassin that night when you trailed me to the lone cabin in the gully.

"Some one set fire to the cabin and destroyed the clothes, but I saved these papers, which are to make Lettice and her mother independent for life. And the stolen hammer proclaims how the poor man was slain. I can readily understand how my uncle, realizing that the receipts he had given were lost, perhaps destroyed, formed a plan to enrich himself at the expense of his friend. I am as deeply humiliated at his rascality as anybody, and I want you to believe me. Now, what I want is for you to find the man who stole these papers, and place him under arrest. Will you do it?"

"Is there such a man other than yourself, Donald?"

Gregerson asked the question in a hesitating state of mind.

"There certainly is. I recognized the blood-stained clothing as belonging to the discharged bookkeeper, Ellsworth Stormer," said Huddlestone with the utmost calmness.

"Ellsworth Stormer!" exclaimed Gregerson.

"The same. Have you forgotten that he was discharged only a day or two before the murder? I have suspected him all along."

"So might I only for the fact that he was drowned in the lake only a few days after leaving Pine Tree Hill."

"I heard of that, too, but believe it was a mistake. Anyhow, the drowning might have occurred after the murder."

"Oh, yes, some time after."

"Promise me you will investigate this matter for me, Gregerson."

There was an appeal in the voice and mien of the speaker amounting to a petition for mercy. After a moment of reflection the land-cruiser accepted Huddlestone's commission, agreeing to see what could be done in the way of ascertaining the whole truth with regard to the fate of the late bookkeeper of Pine Tree Hill.

Gregerson was walking thoughtfully along the road toward the Lake home when he was overtaken by a two-seated rig, on the rear seat of which sat a young woman. The driver halted as the woman—scarcely more than a schoolgirl—addressed the footman.

"Are we on the right road to Pine Tree Hill?" she asked, at the same time craving pardon for her question.

"Yes," said he. "As I am going there I will point it out to you."

The girl made room for him at her side and the rig moved on. Gregerson was too deeply engrossed in his own affairs to notice that his companion was not only young, but strikingly handsome. A heavy trunk strapped on behind indicated that the fair passenger had come some distance.

"Can you tell me if the Lakes are at home—Lettice, especially?"

"Yes, Lettice and her mother are home. You know that the head of the house is dead, I suppose?" Gregerson, attracted by the pleasant tones of the girl's voice, turned to notice her semi-blonde beauty.

"I heard of Uncle Gideon's death while on the way here," she said in a tone expressive of sadness. "I know how terribly Lettice must feel, and am almost sorry that I came at this time. I presume she has given up looking for me by now. I remember writing that I would postpone my trip till about Christmas. Poor cousin!"

Gregerson stared.

"And are you Lettice Lake's cousin?" he asked in puzzled wonder.

"Yes. Doubtless, if you know her, you have heard her speak of her wild, young, California cousin, Florence Iderman."

"But you—you aren't Florence Iderman?" uttered Gregerson hoarsely.

"I certainly am," and she laughed as if amused at his surprise.

This story will be concluded in next week's Ledger. If you like the Ledger, and we feel sure you do, we would like to have you send in a subscription and take it regularly. A great many thrilling and unusual stories will appear in it during the coming year. You will find it a weekly treat, hence you had better send in your subscription now. Let us hear from you.

New Clocks for Old.

Josh—Jerusha, here be a letter from Miss Van Astor sayin' she will give ye $100 for that old mahogany clock of yer gran'dad's!

Jerusha—Dew tell, Josh! Now I kin git that marbleized clock at the corners with the gilt figgers; and Josh, while I think of it, I want you to go right down to the barn and git that drab paint left from paintin' the cow shed last spring. We'll give the old clock a couple o' coats. I bet that'll please Miss Van Astor a heap, and we really ought to after her bein' willin' to give such a big price.

Josh—I'll git the paint, Jerusha. You always wuz great on style, and Miss Van Astor kin tell her friends it's a brand new clock!

SONNETS ON A CHRISTMAS GIFT

To be or not to be? What shall I do?
Shall I buy Jones a Christmas gift this year?
Of course I am unwilling to appear
Stingy, and he's a friend both tried and true.
I am not one of those close persons who
Hang on to every cent, and yet I fear
That I may find his friendship all too dear,
That later my extravagance I'll rue.
I think this Christmas giving is a bore—
An imposition. Why should I expend
Five dollars, or it may be even more?
They always come to more than I intend.
And yet I know I ought not to ignore
Old Jones, for after all he is my friend.

Last year Jones sent me a case of wine,
The year before, cigars, Havanas straight.
This coming Christmas he'll anticipate
Something from me, and something pretty fine.
Of course I must do something in that line.
I can't afford to show myself a skate,
But I've been paying out a lot of late
And his gift, too, might not compare with mine.
If he came up with something rather nice
I might be willing something nice to buy.
But I can't think of any smart device
To find that out, and that's the reason why
I sort of hesitate about the price.
I think I'll compromise upon a tie.

BENNY'S CHRISTMAS SKATES.

"Oh! oh! A pair of skates; a pair of skates!" bawled Benny Aubrey, as he tumbled down the stairway in his night-dress Christmas morning, and seized his stockings, which hung at the chimney-corner.

Sure enough, there were the noses of the skates saucily sticking out of the mouths of the stockings; but how they got in there was a wonder, and for a time it did seem a wonder how they were to be got out. Something must give, and it did; for in a speck of time the boy, frantic with delight, held up the beautiful skates to be looked at and admired by his parents, and sisters, and brothers. Never, perhaps, since the cow jumped over the moon has any ordinary-sized boy leaped higher or danced with greater glee than did Benny that morning. Oh, how proud he was! He had dreamed all the night, so he thought, about skates and skating. For a long time back his ideas had been very clear as to what he wanted Santa Claus to bring him, but, with a modest respect remarkable for one of his age, he did not want to appear even to dictate or be extravagant in his demands. It was expecting a good deal, to be sure, to have a pair of skates brought. Doubtless, too, this feeling was not a little aided by the talk of his doting parents, who referred in a very unpleasant manner to his being a small boy, that it was dangerous to play on the ice, that girls and boys had been known to have their ankles sprained, their noses fractured, and their heads cracked, till really a sort of dread would seize Benny and hold him as its victim for a time. But that would soon wear off, and back again came the old spell, particularly when he saw his playmates gliding along and circling on the smooth surface. Then his heart would fairly ache for a pair of skates all his own.

Some one had told him that the papas and mammas of the other boys had bought theirs; but they had plenty of money, and could get what they liked. If he ever got any, Santa Claus must bring them. And he did. There they were, as nice a pair as your eyes ever looked upon. What bold yet graceful toe-curves! What shiny blades! What heel-plates and screws!

Benny had never seen any of that kind before. He thought they were some new invention of Santa Claus, and already he experienced a thrill of triumph when he thought of the curious glances of the boys whom he would distance in the race.

"What are you doing, Benny?" asked the mother, as she watched him.

He was seated on the floor, too excited to be dressed.

"I'm trying on my skates, don't you see? They fit just right," lifting up his bare foot, to which he hastily adjusted one of the skates.

When he stood up he felt an uncomfortable prick in his heel and down he came.

When breakfast was called, Benny forgot all about joining reverently with his papa in saying grace. His mind was otherwise engaged, and every now and then he turned his skate over to be sure he was not deceived, or point out some new beauty. Happy, happy boy! Every new caller that morning was approached and forced to deliver an opinion, and somehow every one who came agreed with Benny that there never had been such a pair left by Santa Claus before.

"Benny," exclaimed Mr. Aubrey, some time after his son began to quiet down. "I will be engaged most of the day at the Eisteddfod (Christmas musical contest for prizes, medals, etc.; custom dating as far back as the Druids) at the Hall. I must preside, and I want you to promise me that you will not go on the ice today. The canal is not entirely frozen over, and it is unsafe for you to go alone. Tomorrow we will go down and have a good time. Will you promise?"

This was not an entire surprise to the boy, who had received many lectures on the subject, but he had hoped that on a day when everybody was happy, the parental checks would be less severe, and he might do just as he pleased.

He murmured falteringly:

"Yes."

The Christmas dinner was brought in piping hot, and the Aubrey family assembled around the table to give it a right hearty greeting. The turkey and sauce were just right, and the good, old-fashioned plum pudding never had tasted better. The friends said Mrs. Aubrey was an adept, and could not be excelled. Nor could she, for she had come from a land where plum puddings originated.

During the meal it was noticed that Benny was morose, and somewhat sullen. The skates had lost half their glamour by the conditions imposed upon him about going on the ice. When the meal was over, he withdrew himself from the company, and went to his own room to brood over his hard fate. If Santa Claus hadn't left the skates, it wouldn't have been half so bad; he could have gone to the Eisteddfod to sing his piece, and contest for a silver medal, without any tempting wishes. He was the best singer in his class, and would be sure to win. But the very attempt to keep out of his mind the thought of skates and skating only fastened it there the more firmly.

Two o'clock arrived, and it was time for the meeting. He sallied forth, taking his skates under his arm to show them, so he thought, to his friends whom he might meet on the way. He took a cross-street which led into the front, facing the canal, so that as he went by on his way to the place he could take a peep at the skaters.

Here they were! What a sight! Enough to turn an older head and stagger a stronger resolution than Benny could summon. He nervously twitched his first pair of skates and wondered, anyway, how they would fit and whether they would slide at all! Far away in a secluded part of the canal were the curlers, who were yelling at the top of their voices, "Swoop it up!" "Swoop it up!" and the pretty stones glided into the magic circle.

In another corner was a dense mass of skaters shouting, whirling, dodging, shrieking, tumbling, which so excited the little spectator that he soon forgot all about his papa's admonition.

In a second he was on his knees fixing on his skates—his own pair. He was proud of that. On previous occasions the other boys had lent him theirs for a short time, but they always wanted them back too soon. Now he could be his own master. After getting on he had to look admiringly for a few minutes at them. How pretty they were! then he was on his feet. Whew! ain't they clippers! His legs went witnout his will, and if he wasn't careful he'd be left behind. Down he comes! That makes bump No. I.

For the purpose of getting a little private might report his disobedience to his papa, he went to a retired spot where there were no other skaters. He became more venturesome, and struck out toward the center of the canal, a stiff breeze caught him squarely, and he was driven before it. Oh, wasn't that fun! He made no effort at all, but stood right up and the wind drove him for practice and to avoid being seen by any who ward. He sailed—he flew!

What booted the danger to him? On he went, out beyond the center of the canal, toward the deep, uncovered waters which had for days been so lashed by the winds as to prevent their being frozen over. He heard at length the sounds of voices, calling in alarm, but his only response was a chuckle. It was so fine to skate that way. On he went, and now he thought he would turn—he had gone far enough.

Behind him the din of voices increased, and he thought he heard the sharp whang of skaters behind him. But lo! he could not stop or turn, for he had not yet learned the skilful part of the science, and the strong wind blew him on. The ice was as smooth as glass. What could he do?

The people saw the danger he was in, and hastened toward him. He has approached the outer edge of the ice, and in another instant he will be in the water. A bold and rapid skater was coming with the fleetness of the wind to his rescue, but he saw that he could not reach him in time, even if it was safe to venture to the very edge, so he cried out:

"Fall down—fall down on the ice!"

At once the boy obeyed, but with his headway and the wind he was brought to the verge of the ice, and beyond all apparent help. The people stood at a distance, with blanched cheeks, aching hearts and trembling limbs, expecting to see him every moment sink out of sight. The situation was painful.

"A rope! a rope!" shouted one. "Throw him a rope!"

"He will be in the water and out of sight before a rope can be obtained!" shouted another.

Benny felt himself slipping, slipping along with nothing to grasp, and his father's words burned in his heart. The skater who had told him to fall turned to the crowd and said:

"I will get that boy or lose my life in the attempt!" and struck out boldly and swiftly over the thin ice which bent and snapped beneath his weight. He curved to the right, swooping like a bird in its circuit, the blades of his skates cutting within a few inches of the edge, seized the boy by the collar as he passed, and bore him into the midst of the throng.

The rescuer and the rescued were hailed with prolonged cheers, which rent the air.

Benny was placed on his skates and told to march off the ice just as fast as his skates would carry him—an order which he obeyed to the best of his ability. He arrived in a little cove, where he found a stranded canal-boat, the running-boards of which were just level with the water when the canal was full. Ice had formed before the water had been let out by the wash-gate of the canal, lowering the water in the sunken boat, but the ice still retaining its level with the boards. He crawled on this and thought it would not be any harm to skate here a little while, when suddenly it gave way and he was floundering and splashing in the water in the boat. It was over his head, only a small part of the ice had come down, leaving the rest as a sheet above him. There was less hope of rescue this time from the skaters, who were some distance off; but fortunately two men, who were standing in a door of a large warehouse through which grain was received from the boats, had their attention drawn to him by his cries. They hastened down by a side stairway, and, seizing a boat-hook, fished him out as a grocer does a mackerel from a fish-barrel. Benny toddled home with his skates, the nose of one of them broken off, and entered the house bawling and looking like a forked icicle. He always thought that his misfortunes on that day were owing to his disobedience. Perhaps he was right.

FREAKS OF THE LIGHTNING

At this season of the year thunderstorms are more or less prevalent; but though every one is fully aware of the power of destructiveness of lightning, few persons, comparatively speaking, know what strange and fantastic tricks that elusive force occasionally performs.

One of the strangest pranks to which lightning is addicted is that of undressing its victims, in which diversions it displays considerable more fondness for mischief than do many human beings. For example: a woman in Athlone, Ireland, was caught in a thunderstorm, and was struck by a bolt of lightning, which completely stripped her of and destroyed her clothes and boots, without injuring her in the slightest degree. She was wrapped up in a blanket and conveyed to the nearest village, where she quickly recovered from the shock.

A similar instance occured near Avignon, France, a few years ago. A woman and two young girls were standing close to a reaping machine when a flash of lightning struck the woman and killed her on the spot, while the two girls suffered no inconvenience, beyond having every particle of their clothing removed from their bodies. Otherwise they were safe, sound—and astounded.

During a severe storm which took place in Horncastle, England, in 1901, twenty cows took refuge in an empty stable. Suddenly a flash of lightning entered by the open door and killed exactly half their number. But, instead of killing those nearest the opening, it began with the first and killed every alternate one; the even numbers escaping with nothing worse than a fright.

Still more extraordinary was the trick played by a bolt of lightning which ran along the roof of a hayloft without doing any damage, and traveled to the sheepfold, where it killed all the black sheep, while it left all the white uninjured.

How often do we see great tree trunks decayed and desolate, standing sadly, like decapitated bodies? In the majority of cases this is the result of lightning. Some years ago two sturdy oaks at Brampton, England, were struck; both were split asunder, and every particle of bark was shaved off and hung in long strips from the top of the tree to the trunk close to the ground.

Another common performance of lightning is the fusion of metals. A century ago a windmill at Great Marton, in Lancashire, England, was struck during a heavy storm, when a thick iron chain used for hoisting up the sacks of corn must have been, if not actually melted, at any rate, softened. Indeed, the links were dragged downward by the weight of the lower part, and, meeting, became soldered, as it were, in such a manner that the chain was a veritable bar of iron.

Through the agency of this mysterious fluid the atmosphere is transformed into a forge. Thick leaden pipes melt like sugar in water, while nails, bolts, and tools are welded together in a most unaccountable manner. There are even cases on record where money has been melted and the purse uninjured; a sword blade liquefied, while the scabbard remained intact. As for the gilding on frames and cornices, it has frequently been removed by lightning, and instantly applied to objects that were never intended to be so ornamented.

Many readers may be sceptical when asked to believe that the facsimile of a landscape could be photographed on the inside of the skin of a sheep which had been struck by lightning at Mechlin, Belgium. This sounds impossible, but it is well authenticated.

In another case which occurred four years ago, a young man was walking in the outskirts of Berlin when he was struck by lightning and remained unconscious for many hours. He was taken to the house of the nearest doctor, who examined him, and discovered on the left side of his chest the portrait of a young lady of considerable attractions. At first sight there was every appearance of a miracle having been wrought, for no female, old or young, had been near him at the time of the accident. The explanation of the miracle, however, proved to be very commonplace, for in an inside coat pocket, exactly over the lightning portrait, was a photograph of the identical young lady whose features had been thus mysteriously transferred.

"Willin'."

Kind Lady—You oughtn't to be begging.
Mendicant—I know it, mum. Wot I needs is a good-looking wife to do it fer me. Could yer recommend any sich a person, mum?

The Philpot Robbery

The Mystery of a $100,000 Theft

By Paul Gray

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CHAPTER I.

THE COMMISSION.

PHIL PRY, the dashing young detective-reporter of the Daily Star staff, just home from a well-earned vacation after successfully solving the mystery in the famous Broad street murder, was calmly lunching when an urgent summons from the managing editor of the Star called him to the office.

On his way thither he heard the newsboys eagerly crying, "All about the $100,000 Jewel Robbery! Yuxtry!" Buying a paper he quickly scanned the story under the big scare head lines. It began as follows:

"Stolen—Over $100,000 worth of rare jewels, including a diamond necklace recently imported, a coronet of pearls, said to have belonged to a former Spanish queen, a diamond sunburst brooch, four jeweled watches and a large quantity of diamond rings, were stolen mysteriously from the Riverside drive home of Mr. Phineas Philpot, the millionaire bond merchant, last night.

"The robbery was not discovered until this noon when Mrs. Philpot went to the steel strong-box in her apartments to secure the diamond necklace, which she intended to wear to the opera in the evening. Then she found, to her horror, that the strong-box, which had been guaranteed fire and burglar proof, had been opened and rifled. Not another thing in the house had been molested, and no trace has been discovered of the way in which the burglars entered or left the mansion. The police are without the faintest clew."

Then followed two columns of details bearing on the robbery, but offering no key to the solution.

"That reads like a tough one to crack," murmured Pry to himself, as he hurried into the editorial rooms of the Star. A moment later he was ushered into the private office of the managing editor, Mr. Gee.

"Sorry to have called you in before your vacation was completed," he said, "but we thought you might want to try your wits on this Philpot mystery. The rest of the boys seem to be pretty much at sea on it."

"Thank you for the chance, sir," responded Pry. "I'll go out on it at once."

"Maybe I can give you a pointer or two that the papers haven't got to yet," said Gee, turning his spectacled eyes full on the reporter. "This Philpot, although he is in good standing financially now, went through bankruptcy about fifteen years ago, if I remember rightly. I also believe that this present Mrs. Philpot is his second wife. He married her about ten years ago, after getting a divorce from his first wife, I think."

"Any children?" Pry asked casually.

"I believe not," answered Gee. "As far as we have been able to learn, which isn't very far, as Philpot has barred reporters from the house, some sort of mystery attaches to the place, but the residents of the neighborhood are unable to explain what it is. The house, you know, which is a big four-storied affair of stone, is on the most aristocratic section of Riverside drive, where you can't learn very much from the neighbors."

"Do you know exactly how this strong-box was reached and opened?"

"The police report says that the safe was of steel, about three feet square, set in a case of stone alongside the fireplace in Mrs. Philpot's boudoir. It was secured by two combination locks, and the front of it was entirely concealed by a rich mahogany stand and elaborate hangings.

"Then the safe was not broken open, but was unlocked through the two combinations?"

"That's right, according to the best of our information."

"And who knew the combinations?"

"Only Philpot and his wife."

"Any signs that the house was entered?"

"Not a single sign."

"When was the safe last opened?"

"This is Friday. Mrs. Philpot tells the police that she last used it a week ago today, and is positive that she fully locked it when she returned the jewels she had worn."

"She is sure that she returned the jewels? That she has not mislaid them?" Phil Pry was getting interested now, and his questions came quick and sharp.

"She is positive. I might be inclined to doubt her on that point, but, you see, she used only a part of her display the last time the strong-box was opened, and everything in it was cleaned out by the robbery."

"What do you know of the present financial status of Philpot?"

"It's O. K., I guess. He's head of a big Wall street bond house that has been exceedingly prosperous during the past few years."

"And what of his wife?"

"We haven't looked into her past because there appeared to be no occasion to do so. Her husband is able and willing to supply her with everything she needs or desires. There would be no possible reason for her to misappropriate the jewels. Besides, they are hers, anyway."

Phil Pry gave no sign to commit himself to an opinion on this phase of the case. He only kept up his fusillade of questions.

"Who had access to the apartments of Mrs. Philpot?" he asked.

"Besides herself, only her maid, Janet Price, whom she has had with her for five years and whom she trusts implicitly, and occasionally a chambermaid, who is never allowed there alone, but always with this Miss Price present."

"Any rewards offered?"

"Yes, Philpot announces that he will give $5,000 for the return of the jewels, and $1,000 for the conviction of the thief."

"What do the police think?"

"They're not thinking—at least, not out loud. They've sweated all the servants in the house, and they've shaken up Philpot and his wife with a lot of questions, but they're clean befuddled as far as we can see. So are we, as far as that goes. So we concluded to call you in and see if you could not throw some light on the enigma. You gave us one of the greatest beats in the Star's history when you solved the Broad street murder mystery so quickly and so completely, and we are half-hoping that you can do something like it in this case."

"Thank you, sir, but this is a much more difficult case. In the Broad street murder there were only two possible angles. Here, so far as I can make out from your facts, there are at least five angles and possibly more. Then you know we newspaper men have to work harder than the police. Their authority and their badge gives them the right of entrance wherever their suspicions lead them. We are barred in a lot of our investigations by inability to reach the people we most need to see. However, I am not making any excuses in advance. I'll do the best for the Star that I can. But unless I solve this thing in a hurry, you'll not hear from me before tomorrow afternoon."

"Do you want any one to assist you?"

"Not at present. This is a case where I must probe alone."

CHAPTER II.

HIS FIRST BIG SCOOP.

Phil Pry had not lived an easy life. Left fatherless and motherless at the age of twelve years by a scourge that had stricken both his parents, he had brought himself up. Practically penniless, he had sharpened his wits and won an uncertain living by selling papers in the great American metropolis.

His energy was boundless and his ambition commendable. Remembering the precepts instilled in his young mind by a loving mother, he shunned the questionable sports of his young companions. He would not gamble with them and he barred saloons in his rounds for trade.

But he did not neglect to use his sharp eyes always, and many were the faces of noted crooks he imprinted on his mind, and many were the tricks of their following that he observed to stow away in his memory.

Education had an attraction for him, too. He had imbibed the rudiments during the lifetime of his parents, and when they were no longer with him to direct his welfare, he added to his stock of knowledge by attendance at city night schools and by pouring over books which teachers recommended.

His home was only a box of a room, on the fourth floor of a crowded tenement on the lower East Side of New York, but he made it a little less cheerless by hanging on the walls the portraits of his parents and many of the bright pictures he clipped from the pages of current magazines.

Growing older, he sought to rise from the uncertain pursuit of selling papers, and finally managed to secure a place as office boy on the Daily Star. His quickness and keenness quickly commended him for promotion, and when, after several years, during which he had gained insight into the attractions of newspaper life, he asked for a place as a reporter, his request was readily granted.

Pry, in his new job as "cub" reporter, was not long in making good. His activity, his energy, his perseverance and his resourcefulness, speedily attracted notice and commendation, and soon he came to be known as the "detective" of the staff. He seemed to have an inborn faculty for ferreting out the solution of mysterious happenings.

Not until the famous Broad street murder, however, did he get his great chance. This was the case of Abraham Elkins, a wealthy broker, who was found shot to death at his office desk. A pearl-handled revolver with one cartridge discharged lay near, but the police were puzzled by the fact that Elkins was shot both in the head and in the chest.

The murder had evidently been committed during the night. The office bookkeeper, the last employe to leave on the preceding afternoon, had left Elkins alone in his private room. No one was seen to enter or leave the office after the bookkeeper's departure. He was quickly absolved of responsibility because his story was clear and there was a complete absence of motive.

The police floundered about in trying to solve the mystery for a couple of days without result. Then Phil Pry was given the assignment.

Pry had studied the newspaper accounts of the case thoroughly and was thus saved all preliminary delving. His first mission was to inspect the revolver found on the dead man's desk. There was no question about its ownership, because the initials of Elkins's name were engraved upon the handle. Moreover, he had the word of the officers first on the scene of the crime that the one cartridge found exploded in the gun had been very freshly fired.

Then Pry sought the coroner called in the case and from his secured an accurate description of the wounds. From these he decided that the death shots had been fired without the private office of the dead man and not from within, as the police and other detectives had declared.

Then the young reporter paid his first visit to the Elkins office. Barring the doors of the room in which the broker had been found dead, he started a thorough examination.

He found that the sole window in Elkins's private room looked out on a narrow light-well. Six feet across it were the wall and windows of an adjoining office building.

Looking out of the open window—for it was a sultry August day—he closely observed the opposite wall. On the floor above, across from him, he saw that the window was tightly closed.

Seating himself in Elkins's accustomed chair, he found that the wounds in the slain man's chest and head could have been easily made by shots fired from that overlooking window opposite.

His next move was to visit the adjoining building. The caretaker only knew that the office upon which Pry had fastened his suspicions had been rented a little less than a month previous by a man who gave his name as Henry Hemans, and his business as a sales agent.

By means of a liberal tip, Pry induced the caretaker to visit the office. The door was locked and no one responded to their repeated knocks. When the caretaker drew out his bunch of duplicate keys and opened the door, they found it bare of occupants and furniture.

Then Pry opened the window which he had found tightly locked. He discovered he could look directly into Elkins's office, and that the victim of the mysterious murder could not have been more than fifteen feet away from where the young reporter now stood.

Then Pry leaned out and gave the window sashes and sill a close inspection. He smiled inwardly when he found a spot where the wood had been broken slightly. Inserting the point of his knife, he struck a hard substance. Digging it out carefully, he found it to be a cartridge from a 32-caliber revolver. That was the caliber of the weapon found on Elkins's desk.

Developments were fitting very nicely into Pry's theory.

Next he secured a description from the caretaker and janitor of the man Hemans. He was easily described: A tall, bearded man, with hair tinged with gray, a stern gray eye and a faint pink scar just below the left eye; well-dressed with every appearance of the successful business man.

Careful inquiry among elevator men disclosed that Hemans had been seen in the building only occasionally. No one could recall having observed him at all during the past two days.

Then one of the elevator men remembered having seen such a man come down in his car shortly after six o'clock three nights previously. He recalled that he acted rather nervous and impatient.

"Hemans, whoever he is, is the key to this case," thought Phil Pry. "Now to locate him."

Securing the address—No. 202 West One-hundred and ninth street—which Hemans had furnished when he rented the office, Pry made a hurried run uptown. No one at that number or at the neighboring numbers knew of such a man as Hemans.

Undaunted, Pry returned to the Elkins office. Drawing the old chief clerk into the private office, he made him tell all he knew of the business and family life of the slain man that he had learned in the more than fifteen years he had been connected with the concern.

The narrative was garrulous and commonplace until, reaching a period ten years back, the clerk told of the entrance as a partner of Herman Henry.

"Describe him," shot out Pry.

"Why, he was tall, always wore a beard, had cold gray eyes and dark-brown hair. Oh, yes, he had also a thin red mark just beneath his left eye that was said to have come from a duel he once fought in the German University, in which he was educated."

"What has become of him?"

"Oh, he left the firm five years ago and went into business for himself."

"Ever have any trouble with Elkins?"

"Not a bit. He just thought he could do better alone. We remember him here for his beautiful wife, who used to come to the office occasionally."

"Has he been here lately?"

"I have not seen him in the office since he quit the firm."

"And his wife?"

"Not recently, but maybe once or twice since her husband quit the firm."

"Do you know their home address?"

The old clerk looked the name up in the directory and found the address, "No. 109 Two hundred and second street."

Pry looked at his watch. It was just past noon. Then he hastened to the 'phone and called up the Star office.

"It's Pry," he hurried, talking to his managing editor, "I'll have a story for you in about an hour. I hope to have the Elkins case solved by that time."

Then he was off to the Henry home. It was in a handsome apartment house. Pry rang the bell but got no response.

Then he sought the rear entrance and rang. Still no response. At his urgent solicitation that his business was vital, Pry induced the janitor to accompany him to the Henry suite on the third floor. Repeated

"This is a matter of life and death," said rappings brought no reply.
Pry, "so we must get in here."

A liberal fee to the janitor opened the locked door. Pry entered hastily and glanced sharply around the empty rooms until he reached the small library.

Here, seated in an easy chair, eyes closed and face white, he beheld Henry. He touched the hands and found them cold. He felt for a pulse beat in the wrist, but there was none. The man was dead.

On the desk near at hand lay this note:

"I have ready a dose of cyanide of potassium, whch I will swallow as soon as I have completed this note. It is the only thing left for me. I killed Abraham Elkins. I am not ashamed to own it. I had ample provocation. He wrecked my home by winning my wife. We were happy till he came. I knew my wife had ceased to love me, but I did not know the reason until six weeks ago when I discovered them together. Then she confessed that she and Elkins had met clandestinely for years. I warned him I would kill him in my own way and time. He laughed. I tried to win her back and failed. Then I decided to kill Elkins so that no one would know the slayer, and thus save my wife the disgrace. I rented the office overlooking that of Elkins and planned the deed carefully. One day as I stood peering out of the window at him, he glanced up and saw me. He must have read my intention, for thereafter until the last day he appeared to avoid his desk. Then came a time, two days later, when, after business hours, I saw him below. Carefully I raised my window, drew my weapon and looked it over to see that it was all right. He must have seen me, for I suddenly heard the dull crack of a revolver shot and then the faint grinding of a bullet into the window casing. Instantly I raised my weapon, aimed and fired twice. I did not need to hear that my aim was good, for from my schooldays in Germany I had been a certain shot. I saw him fall forward on his desk as I closed and bolted my window. Then I hastened out of the building. The next morning when the papers told of the affair, my wife accused me. I did not deny it. She threatened to expose me until I warned her of her share in the deed. She accepted my offer of life abroad, and this morning she sailed. I am left alone. Well—I'm not afraid to die alone."

That afternoon the Star had the greatest scoop in its history, and Phil Pry got all the credit. But the Diamond Mystery was not to prove so easy of solution.

CHAPTER III.

PRY'S SUBTERFUGE.

Phil Pry sought out one of the private conference rooms in the Star office and locked himself in. Then he sat down in a big easy-chair, closed his eyes and gave himself up to a half-hour of the deepest thought.

"Five different leads have got to be followed up here," he finally concluded to himself. "Philpot could have done it, or his wife, or the pair of them in collusion. Then the maid, Janet Price, might have been the thief, and then again it might have been a burglar. There's certainly a lot of work cut out for me here."

Going directly to the business office of the Star, Pry sought out the credit man.

"I want to get as complete and accurate a line on the financial condition of Phineas Philpot as it is possible for you to obtain," he said. Then he added: "And I want it as quickly as you can get it."

"I'll try to have it ready for you in the morning," answered the business office man.

"I'll call for it then," said Pry, and he hastened out.

A short journey took him to the office of the burglary insurance company, which had placed a risk on the Philpot strong-box. Seeking out the manager, he introduced himself.

"I want to help you solve the puzzle in that robbery if I can," Phil said.

"We'd certainly be glad to get a definite clew," responded the officer, "but it looks very blind to us."

"How much insurance did the Philpots carry on their jewels?"

"Thirty thousand dollars."

"And he claims one hundred thousand dollars worth of valuables were stolen?"

"That's what his list foots up."

"Then, on the face of it, there's nothing to warrant the suspicion that the Philpots might have robbed themselves."

"Well, we never like to suspect our patrons. Philpot's standing in business would seem to render any such suspicion unfair."

"But you have had cases where people who have insured their valuables with you have faked up robberies for the sake of the insurance they could collect?" quizzed the young reporter.

"Yes, a few, but none that ever had the standing of the Philpots."

"Are you going to pay their claim?"

"We will have to unless our detectives or the police make it clear that they were concerned in the robbery themselves."

"You have no evidence pointing in that direction now?"

"Absolutely none."

Phil Pry's next visit was to the office of the safe company which had installed the Philpot strong-box.

"We can't believe that the job was done by any burglar," said the manager in answer to Phil's questions. "Each of the two locks had a different combination, so, of course, both had to be solved before the door could swing clear. There was no evidence that any attempt was made to force the door by dynamite or otherwise."

"Who knew the key to the combinations?" asked Phil.

"Only Philpot and his wife, so far as we know. The strong-box was installed about two years ago, and the combinations explained thoroughly to him and his wife. Then we furnished them with a typewritten copy of the combinations. That is the only key in existence, so far as we know."

"You keep none?"

"No, sir. If the Philpots had lost or mislaid or forgotten the combinations, we could not have helped them open the safe in any other way than by breaking into it."

"Have you any theory as to how the robbery was effected?"

"If we have, it might be unfair to some one to give utterance to it, so we are maintaining a discreet silence."

Pry left the safe company's office without having secured a clew that looked at all promising, but he had added considerable to his fund of information about the case. He stood for a moment irresolute on the outer steps of the building.

"I'll risk it," he decided with himself, and then made his way back to the manager's office.

"I just want to bother you with another inquiry or two," he said. "I'd like to learn if you have made a thorough investigation of the strong-box?"

"Oh, yes; two of our best men have been up there twice and made a complete inspection."

"Could I meet them up there now if I went directly to the Philpot home?"

"Oh, no; they've been back some time and have reported fully."

"Could I see them?"

"No need to bother them," responded the manager somewhat testily, "I've told you everything they've found out."

"And you think they've found it all?"

"I surely do."

Phil carefully concealed the secret satisfaction he felt at this later information. Going out he said to himself:

"Now I think I can risk a little visit to the Philpot home in a different guise from a newspaper reporter. I couldn't get farther than the outer door, probably, if I went up there and told them I was from the Star. But somehow or other I've got to get inside for a while."

Phil accordingly hastened to his rooms and donned an old pair of trousers and an old coat that put him distinctly in the workingman's class. Then he grabbed up a small satchel, dropped into it a screwdriver, a pair of pincers, a small hammer and some brass wire, all of which he had used from time to time in tinkering about his room, and hurried out again.

"It'll be a bold bluff," he thought to himself, "but it ought to work. In any event, they can't any more than throw me out."

He was soon aboard a subway train and flying northward toward the Philpot home. As he neared the stately stone structure, situated among its costly neighbors on Riverside drive, he saw that a thin cordon of police had been thrown about the building.

"Hope I won't strike one that knows me," he thought, as he swung boldly along the walk with his kit of tools under his arm. "It's sure a case of hitting the back door, As a general rule, I'm against making my entrance via the back door, but I suppose I oughtn't to be particular in a case where I'm not figuring as Phil Pry, the reporter, but as Jack Sykes, the safe expert," and with a grin Pry made his way to the rear gate of the Philpot home.

When he pressed the electric bell, a blue-coated figure looked out through the heavy iron gate and gruffly asked:

"What's wanted?"

Phil glanced keenly over the burly policeman and replied:

"Open up, my friend, I'm from the Homer Safe Company, sent up to make another inspection of the 'touched' strong-box."

The bluff worked here, for the big iron gate swung back and Phil stepped inside. Without waiting for any further parley, he hastened up the stone walk toward the rear house door.

His confident ring brought a maid to the door.

"Step in, please," she replied, when he had repeated the purpose of his visit, as he had at the gate, "I'll call the butler."

Phil stood in the entry for some moments before a tall, solemn-faced and bewhiskered individual appeared. Then he repeated his statement.

"Why, a couple of fellows from your place have been up here twice already, nosing around the strong-box and making a mess generally," the butler said imposingly.

"Yes, but they failed to complete the investigation," said Phil, confidentially, "and I've come up to finish it."

"Well, come in and I'll see the madam," responded the butler, and he led Phil into the kitchen. Then he disappeared.

In five minutes the man was back.

"Mrs. Philpot is very angry at this intrusion," he announced. "At first she was disposed to turn you away, but she finally decided to let you go up. You'll have to be short with your work, however."

"I'll be as short as I can and do my work," declared Phil decidedly, as he picked up his grip and followed his guide.

They passed through a large kitchen, a pantry, and then into a large rear hall. Up the stairs they climbed until they reached a spacious hall. Along this Phil was conducted until midway they paused at a massive door.

The butler tapped lightly and almost immediately the door was opened by a pretty maid in black gown and white cap and apron.

"This is the safe company man again, Miss Price, but it's Mrs. Philpot's orders that he be as quick as he can."

"Very well, sir," the maid replied. She had a sweet serious face and a gentle voice that quickly attracted more than casual attention. "Please step in," she continued.

As Phil crossed the threshold, the half-stifled cry of a woman broke from an adjoining room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MYSTERIOUS EYES.

Phil glanced sharply into the face of the maid as the cry was repeated, this time more of a moan. Janet Price appeared a woman of some self-control, for she gave no sign of alarm or fright at the unusual sounds.

"You may go, James," she said decisively to the butler. Then she closed the massive door that led into Mrs. Philpot's sumptuous apartments.

Phil found himself in a high, vaulted room, finished in white and gold. A massive chandelier of shining crystals hung from the ceiling, while on the walls were suspended rare works of art. Rich hangings fell about the windows and doors, and a heavy silken rug, so thick that when Phil stepped upon it, he thought he was treading upon a shimmering cushion, covered the floor.

An arched opening, thickly hung with handsome draperies, showed the way into an adjoining room—Mrs. Philpot's bedroom, Pry promptly and correctly surmised. In the opposite wall opened a huge, brass-trimmed fireplace, over which hung a massive gilt-bordered mirror.

Beside this fireplace stood a high, shelved mahogany case, above and around which hung thick silken draperies. Odd pieces of carved and gilded furniture were scattered profusely about the apartment. On the mantelpiece and the quaint tables stood costly bric-a-brac and the richest golden, silver and crystal trinkets. Everything in range of the eye bespoke ample wealth and a prodigal taste in dispensing it.

Phil Pry's lightning-like glance took in every detail of the scene in the instant he was stepping into the room.

"What's the trouble in there?" he queried, as he nodded his head toward the adjoining room from whence the sounds of a woman's distress had evidently come.

"Something that does not concern you in the least, sir," was the maid's answer, sharp and direct.

"I didn't know but what I might be of some assistance," was Phil's rejoinder in an apologetic tone. Then, to himself: "This one is a tartar; it doesn't look as if I'd get much out of her."

"None of your sass, young man."

When he glanced at her again, he found her studying him intently.

"You're not one of the men who were up here from the safe company a while ago," she finally blurted out.

Between trying to hear the low murmur of tones from the adjoining room and matching his wits with the sharp-eyed maid, Phil found that he was more than busy.

"I sure ain't," Phil said in reply to her last thrust. "The boss was sore at the report them fellers brought back, and sent me up to look over the box again."

"It's a pity one visit wasn't enough," she flashed back. "It's a shame to keep us torn up this way, with Mrs. Philpot so excited."

"You're some excited yourself, ain't you?" Phil grinned.

"None of your sass, young man," the girl replied. "Here, you'd better get to work if you're going to do anything," and she led the way to the mahogany case beside the fireplace.

Swinging back one of the draperies, she pulled out the case, which Phil quickly saw was set upon bearings and responded easily to her touch. Clear of the wall, he beheld the heavy steel door of the safe. It had been left unlocked, and he promptly swung it wide open.

First he examined the door. It was absolutely without any marks of violence. Then he peered into the interior. On each side and at the rear two rows of inlaid drawers, each with a dainty bronze handle, closed themselves against his grip.

"Where are the keys to these?" he asked, turning to the maid, who stood near by, watching him closely.

"Is it necessary that you should go into them?" she inquired.

"It certainly is," Phil responded decisively.

"Well, I'll get them for you, then," she said.

Phil watched her keenly as she turned, and, going to the opposite side of the room, took from an inner drawer of a small writing desk an ivory-carved box. This she unclasped and lifted out a bunch of thin keys, each numbered to correspond with the numerals on the drawers in the safe.

As the maid raised the keys, a folded slip of paper caught in the bunch and fluttered to the floor.

Eager for the faintest trace of a clew, Phil darted forward, and, as if to be polite to the maid, picked up the slip of paper. Dexterously he contrived to insert a finger in the fold and throw it open so that he might scan its contents.

A series of letters and figures partly filled the sheet.

"The combinations, eh?" he asked simply.

"Yes," she replied. "Kept the keys and that together so that if at any time the combinations were forgotten, they could be easily referred to."

So saying, she turned the bunch of keys over to Phil.

"A fine way to protect a fortune in jewels," he thought to himself, "to leave the combinations and the keys to the strong-box lying about in this loose way. It's small wonder that this fine bunch of loot wasn't carried away long ago."

Pry went back to the safe and made a detailed examination. He found the drawers opened easily to the proper keys. Each drawer was about a foot long, and some of them were now crowded with legal-looking papers. But those in which the maid indicated that the Philpot jewels had been kept were all empty.

Ever and anon as Phil kept at his examination, he heard that half-cry, half-wail from the adjoining room. Janet Price heeded it little, but acted as though the sounds were not unaccustomed to her. Still, they bothered Phil, and he determined not to leave the place until he had secured some explanation.

He maneuvered about the strong-box, trying every key and every drawer and minutely inspecting the big outer door, but all the while his eyes and his thoughts were busy with other things in the room. Even as he looked askance at the rich tapestries that hung from the archway to the adjoining room, he thought he saw a pair of glittering eyes and part of a man's face peering out from behind a narrow opening in the drapery.

Phil outwardly appeared not to notice this startling development, but inwardly he was at once keenly alive to its possibilities. To feign simplicity, he even hummed a popular air, and then, with his eyes alert for a further move from behind the drapery, he let his lips frame a low whistle.

"Always keep those keys in the same place?" he asked, turning to the maid that his eyes might have another opportunity to sweep the drapery.

"Of course," replied Janet Price, but Phil paid scant attention to the answer. He saw those glittering eyes behind the drapery move now, and the apartment seemed to grow oppressive with mystery.

"If I am to solve anything here, it looks as if I would have to make a bold break of my own," thought Phil, "and I think I'll do it quick."

Janet Price was standing in the middle of the room with her eyes still set on Phil. There was a keen, scrutinizing look in them which did not escape the reporter. He felt that there was an enigma behind them that he would like to understand, but his thoughts were too busy with the eyes behind the drapery just now. And, moreover, that low, moaning cry came ever and again to his ears.

Having satisfied himself with his examination of the safe, he gathered up the keys and the combination slip and stepped across the room to where the maid stood waiting to receive them.

"Well, what do you make of it?"

"Why, it looks as if some one who knew the combinations and also where the inner keys were kept did the job," Phil answered, looking squarely into the maid's eyes.

But she met his scrutiny fairly, and gazed steadily back.

"There isn't a mark to indicate that any professional did the job," continued Phil. Then, abruptly, "You don't suppose any one in the house did it, do you?"

"To-be-sure not," she replied spiritedly. "You don't suppose that I would have waited this long to tell my suspicions, do you?"

"But couldn't some of the servants have possibly done it?"

"How could they? None of them are ever in this apartment unless either Mrs. Philpot or myself are present."

"But couldn't they have got in at night?"

"The outer doors to both rooms in the apartment are always securely locked on the inside."

Phil's sweeping glance again took in the eyes behind the tapestry. He edged a step toward it and said:

"Well, I don't see how any blame can be placed on the safe people."

Before the girl could reply, Phil made a quick leap toward the drapery, and opening his arms wildly, threw them about the spot where he had seen the mysterious eyes. He felt his hands close on a pair of shoulders and he gripped them as in a vise. Then the delicate drapery broke from its fastenings overhead, and with his unknown and unseen quarry, Phil tumbled in a confused heap on the floor.

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

Ten Rules for Husbands.

1. Avoid verbal controversies at all times, because you will come off second best no matter if you're the most brilliant lawyer in the world. If controversies are unavoidable, give way after a pretended argument. You will increase in your wife's respect, because you've been so wise as to recognize her as the wiser.

2. Never forget that you are married to a woman and not an angel.

3. Don't refuse your wife money too often; exercise rigid economy in your own expenses, that you may be able to do so.

4. If you observe that your wife doesn't love you enough, remember that she loves jewels and fine clothes.

5. See to it that your better half always has the last word. That makes her happy, while it would leave you, with your love of justice and truth, only uncomfortable.

6. Read only books that everybody is talking about, so that your wife can discuss them with you. She would be miserable if she lacked a gossip partner just because you, in your crazy disregard for what "everybody likes," read books of your own selection.

7. Even in a controversy, don't wound your wife by being too logical.

8. Bestow upon your wife from time to time the compliment that she is the most beautiful of creatures, and that you are simply desperate because you are so hopelessly unworthy of her.

9. If your wife is shrewd, beware of seeming shrewder. If she is stupid, be more stupid—in order (in either event) that she may not be angry.

10. Above all else, respect your mother-in-law. Remember that she is primarily responsible for your marital happiness.

No Opposition Votes.

"A mild-mannered and genial Tennesseean, named Galloway, was elected to the State Senate from Shelby County," said Secretary Dickinson of the War Department, himself from Tennessee, "but there was a protest over it because, it was claimed, Galloway had been concerned in a duel in his younger days. The time came for swearing in the Senators and the clerk called the roll by counties. When Shelby County was reached, Galloway, wearing a long black frock coat, stepped into the aisle.

"'Mistuh President and Senatuhs,' he said, 'I have heard of this yere protest against my sitting in this body as a Senatuh because I once engaged in an affair of honah. Now, suh, I want to say that I did engage in an affair of honah, in my younger days, in the State of Mississippi, and latuh, in another affair of honah in the State of Arkansaw. Once again, I engaged in an affair of honah as a second, not as a principal, in the State of Mississippi.

"'I contend, suh, that the State of Tennessee has no jurisdiction ovah what is done in other States, and I am here to say, suh, that if any Senatuh thinks otherwise and does not vote for me at this time I shall call him out, by gad, suh! call him out and hold him personally responsible to me, suh. That's all.'

"And they all voted for him."

A Regretted Success.

Massachusetts has furnished some attorneys who have become famous legal lights before the nation. A town in the Bay State has one at present who bids for a place among them. This lawyer is noted for the brightness and aptness of his retorts, and any smart witness that gets ahead of him has to sit up nights to frame up the point.

He was recently counsel for the plaintiff in a case where a woman was very refractory under cross-examination. Although he used all politeness and courtesy in his examination, he received nothing but sharp and unsatisfactory replies. Her husband was in court, a meek and humble specimen of the henpecked spouse. Finally the lawyer put another very civil question, to which the woman replied with vindictive fire flashing from her eyes:

"Mr. Lawyer, you can't catch me, and you needn't think you can; no, siree, you can't catch me!"

With his most fetching smile, the attorney replied:

"Madam, I haven't the slightest desire to catch you, and your husband looks to me as if he very sorely regretted that he had succeeded."

The crier rapped for order as a wave of laughter swept over the courtroom, and the judge bowed his head to hide a smile.

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ADVERTISING RATES.

The advertising rate is $1.60 per Agate Line per issue. About eight words to a line, 14 lines to an inch. This price also includes insertion of the advertisement in THE SATURDAY BLADE. THE BLADE and LEDGER together have a circulation of

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THE CHICAGO LEDGER

CHICAGO, ILL.

GENTLE JABS.

Buy 'em early—for next year.

Let us be thankful that the day after comes but once a year.

Shoppers at this late day should make as few false motions as possible.

It is a lucky Christmas doll that does not yet need first aid to the injured.

Actions speak louder than words when a girl is discovered under the mistletoe.

Many a Christmas present ostensibly delayed in transmission was bought the day after.

Were you thoughtful enough to hold out a few dollars for the after-Christmas bargains?

Those who get married on Dec. 25 may not get wise to the true meaning of Christmastide until later.

Are you relieved because the police did not arrest you for wearing your boisterous Christmas necktie?

He is a wise person who in buying his own Christmas present saved his money until the bargain season began.

Not so many Christmas weddings are reported as usual this year. What's the reason? Cost of living too high?

After we get the Fourth of July tamed some philanthropist will start in to make Christmas shopping safe and sane.

In accord with the eternal fitness of things, people who keep harping on disagreeable things should be strung up.

While it may not be nice to look a gift turkey in the teeth, you may inquire with propriety how long it was in cold storage.

That string around your thumb was to remind you to get a big turkey if you happen to have forgotten why your wife tied it there.

If you have invited children to the Christmas dinner do not worry because you did not tell them to bring their appetites along. They will.

Toy drums and horns that would be strong on Christmas and would crumble to nothingness the next day would supply a want.

"Leave out the brandy sauce from your Christmas pudding," advises a Blue Island woman. Leave out the pudding also unless you are on the best possible terms with your stomach.

In looking for the holiday spirit search among those under 40—some years under. Of course the older ones have the best of intentions, but it takes the digestion of the ancient one a longer time to recover from the frivolities of the day. Added to this are a number of petty annoyances, including bills for the good cheer and the useful articles that tried their best to pass as good cheer. Besides, there is the extra work to catch up from the rest on Christmas and to prepare for the day off on New Year's. So, to find the truly joyous, search out the children and see how they appreciate what is going on. After a grown man has thought about Christmas a couple of times he turns to business and forgets it until the unobtrusive bill collector pushes his way timidly into the inner office.

In African Jungles;

Or, A GIRL'S FIGHT FOR HONOR

By Colonel Alfred B. Tozer

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CHAPTER XX.

A NEST OF DIAMONDS.

IN A moment, however, Bamali stepped forward and laid in Norman's hand the great diamond which had been found. The explorer looked at the gem like a man in a daze.

"Where did you get it?" he asked.

Bamali pointed out to the center of the crater.

"And you remained in the jungle, risking your life, with this fortune in your possession?" said Norman. "Most natives would have fled to Mombasa with such a find."

"We found it together," said Bamali, pointing to Bement.

"Well, you found a fortune," said Norman, passing the stone over to Bement. "I have no claim to it."

Bement refused to accept the stone, and Norman was finally obliged to put it away in his pocket.

"From this time on," he said to the young man, "we are partners in this diamond business. I have enough now to make me rich for life. I hope you will leave the district equally well provided for."

Bement thanked him and turned away with Bamali, saying to Susan and Clellie, whom they met going to the cave, that they were going out to pick up a few score of diamonds as samples!

The natives brought in by Norman were scattered about the rim, the girls, the guide, who had come in with Bement, the wounded man, and Norman were now in the cave, so there was no one moving about in the lower portion of the crater. As the two men moved toward the place where the little rill disappeared in the pipe, the native stopped short and lifted his hand.

"What is it?" asked Bement.

"Guns!" was the short reply.

They both listened for a full minute.

The sounds of the jungle came over the rim in a medley of roars, howls, calls and trumpetings, but above all, from away off to the west, came the sharp ring of a heavy gun.

The Kalkenbrenner party was coming in.

"There'll be trouble now," said Bamali.

"With that honest old animal catcher?" asked Bement. "Never! He has money enough of his own."

"I've seen a great many white men," said Bamali, "but I have yet to meet one who has all the money he wants."

Bement laughed and moved on.

"If Kalkenbrenner does not make a fight for the diamonds," said Bamali, in a moment, "what about this man Morris? He is a diamond hunter, and he has come far to enrich himself. Will he fight for them?"

"He'll have to go and get an army first," replied Bement. "Kalkenbrenner's men won't fight for him, and he sent most of his men back when he came up with the big animal catcher."

"And this Kilrain? Will he carry you away a prisoner?"

"He will not!" almost shouted Bement. "I'll never go back to Chicago to be put into jail! The natives will fight for me, I believe, and Kilrain and his detective will have a hard time getting out alive if they attempt to take me in charge."

"The master said that peril was past," suggested Bamali.

"If it is," replied Bement, "I don't know it. Every one here seems to know more about my business than I do myself. Well, the thing for us to do now is to get to the bottom of that little drip that runs into the pipe. If we can get the diamonds out, we shall save a lot of trouble."

"You are certain that there are diamonds there?"

"If there are diamonds anywhere, they are at the bottom of that drip," was the reply. "The water has washed the diamond-bearing earth away, and if there are gems in the formation we shall find them in a pocket there."

Bamali shook his head, and the two proceeded to the trinkle of water and followed it down to the place where it slid into the volcanic breathing-hole. Bement put his ear to the opening and listened intently.

"It is not deep," he said, "for I can hear the drop of it below, and the ripple where it moves off into a subterranean channel. It strikes me that we ought to be able to find that underground channel. It may be large enough to admit us to the bottom of this opening."

"We can dig down to the bottom in a few days," suggested Bamali.

But Bement insisted on making another tour of the crater, hoping to find an opening leading down to the channel through which the water from the spring passed away. The arrival of the party whose guns they had heard would doubtless throw the whole camp into confusion, and mining would be delayed. Besides, the man Morris might insist on a share of what was taken out. This would lead to bloodshed, as Norman was in no mood to make further division.

The young man was satisfied that the diamond drift there was the result of some freak action of nature. No such riches as those at Kimberley would ever be found there. He knew that very well. Therefore, if, in advance of the arrival of the others, he could make his way to the only place where diamonds were likely to be found, he could gather them in and save all trouble. After that, the others might hunt the crater over to their heart's content.

The men passed around the wall of the cup a dozen times before their attention was attracted to a jumble of rocks by a serpent thrusting up his head and hissing at them. As the creature swung its bloated head from side to side and thrust its red tongue out in rage, Bement caught an idea.

"Look here," he said to Bamali, "that snake comes out of a hole in the ground. How do we know how deep that hole is, or where it leads to?"

"It may lead to the water, eh?"

"Sure it may," replied Bement. "At any rate, I'm going to see if it does."

Bamali drew his revolver to kill the serpent, but Bement checked him.

"No firing now," he said. "That would attract the attention of the whole camp to us. We must pursue this search for the gems without being observed. In fact, if we find a pocketful of diamonds, we ought to carry them out without letting any one know."

Bamali put up his revolver and lifted a stone to throw at the snake. His aim was good, for the head of the reptile was flattend against a rock. But the impact of the thrown stone started the others in motion. They fell with a slow, grinding motion, leaving an opening a yard in diameter, dipping down into the earth vertically. From the opening came the sound of running water.

Bement was about to bend over and look down, when a serpent, larger than the one that had been killed, wiggled out, over a ragged, rocky wall, and struck at him. He started back with a cry of alarm, staggering against a stone as he did so, and fell to the ground. He was still weak from his wound and from loss of blood, and did not rise instantly. While he lay there he felt a pressure on his legs, a pressure moving up toward his throat.

Then heavy rings came to other portions of his body, and he knew that a nest of serpents, disturbed in their hiding place, had swarmed out and attacked him. He shouted to Bamali and turned over on his face, drawing his hands up under his breast, in order that no naked flesh might be exposed to the fangs of the reptiles.

It seemed an age before the native acted. In fact, the poor fellow was scared half out of his senses by the steady stream of snakes swarming out of the hole. Finally, however, he got busy with a club and began beating the snakes off, bestowing more than one blow on the body of the unlucky Bement.

The work was short, for the native struck hard blows, and Bement arose to his feet with a shudder, with a sense of sea sickness at the contact. It was some time before he could find courage to approach the hole again.

"There are no more there," said Bamali. "They all ran out."

"I should hope that they did," was the reply, "for we've got to go down into that nest. Get some dry grass and we'll send a fire down first."

Bamali did as directed, and bundle after bundle of blazing elephant grass was sent into the opening. No more reptiles came out. After waiting for the smoke to in a measure clear away, Bamali brought a rope, tied it snugly about Bement's waist, and lowered him into the opening.

About twenty feet from the entrance the young man struck solid ground, but this was only a rounded bank at the edge of a small current of water. The channel which had been cut out by the action of water was not high enough for Bement to walk upright in.

He stooped down, released himself from the rope, and peered upstream. There, perhaps a hundred feet away, was a shaft of light. A trinkle of water there told him that he was looking at the volcanic shaft he was seeking. At the bottom of that shaft, if anywhere, he would find diamonds. He drew out his electric torch and moved up toward the shaft.

He was not long in reaching the spot, for the bottom of the channel was smooth, and progress easy. On his hands and knees, under the pipe, he dug eagerly at the point upon which the water fell. The material through which he worked his fingers was merely rock, worked into sand by the force of the current. Half a foot down he came upon a cluster of pebbles. He lifted a large one and examined it. A diamond. Again he forced his fingers into the cup-like cavity at the bottom of the fall.

He cleared away the sand and filled his pockets with what he found there. He knew that his pockets held more than a million dollars' worth of gems. The blue diamond-bearing earth had been washed away by the water and the stones had settled there in the cup. How many of them had been washed away at times of inundation he had no idea.

When the cup was empty, and when his pockets were full, he turned back toward the opening. The rope still dangled above the water where he had left it, but it seemed nearer to the surface than before. Closer examination showed that the channel was filling with water, and filling rapidly.

In a moment Bement understood what had taken place. The great stones which had fallen from the opening had rolled down the waterway until checked by some obstruction. There they had stopped and blocked the escape of the waters of the spring. Unless he could get to the opening before the channel filled, he would never get out. He plunged along through the back water, with a bare breathing place at the apex of the tunnel.

CHAPTER XXI.

SAFETY AND PROSPERITY.

The narrow channel was full of water in a moment, then Bement fought for breath. There was a roaring in his ears, then he felt the pull of a current. The obstruction must have given way before the pressure of the water, and the mass was sweeping downward, carrying him with it. There was no knowing where he would land if swept out. It might be in a subterranean lake, a thousand feet under the grass.

There was only one chance for him, and that was to catch the rope as he swept past it. But when he came to the opening he could not see the rope. It was lying like a string along the roof of the tunnel, held by the pressure. He swept the narrow space above with both hands and caught it. There was a pull from above, and Bamali drew him out—into a group of astonished people.

The first thing he heard was a trifle of chaff regarding his bedraggled condition; the next was a volley from the outside.

"The big party you traveled with for a time," said Norman, in answer to an inquiring look, "is storming our fortress. There is sure to be a battle."

"Wait!" said Bement, eagerly. "Wait until you hear what I have to say before you order your men to shoot back. Step this way, please."

Norman followed the young man, with wonder in his eyes. In a moment the wonder was changed to glad surprise, to joy, to the triumph of victory. Bement merely said to him:

"Let them come in! I am positive that I have all the diamonds within a thousand miles of here in my pockets this moment. Let them come in!"

The recital was a short one. Bement explained why he thought there were no more diamonds there, why he was certain that the one diamond-bearing pipe was merely a freak, and why it would be just as well to let the others in for a search.

As soon as opportunity offered, Norman drew Bement away again and examined the diamonds casually.

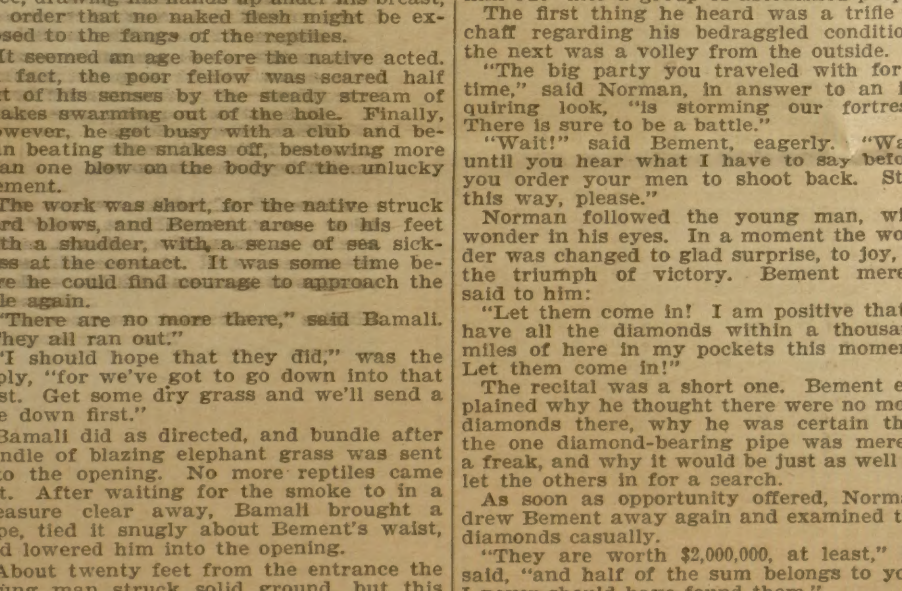
"They are worth $2,000,000, at least," he said, "and half of the sum belongs to you. I never should have found them."

"I just stumbled on them," said the young man. "Did you ever hear of such a freak place for diamonds?"

"It is the simplest thing in the world," was the reply. "The interior forces threw up the blue earth, bearing diamonds, only in this one pipe. Perhaps the others were not deep enough. Then the spring formed and trinkled into the pipe, wearing away the blue earth, just as it is worn away by rain and sunshine in the yards at Kimberley. Of course, the diamonds dropped into the cup made by the falling water. How many more there were in the pipe no one will ever know."

Orders were now given to the leader of the savages to retreat from the rim and let the others enter. A guide even showed Kalkenbrenner the passage under the rim, and all were soon inside the big bowl of the crater.

The big hunter almost fell on Bement's neck when he saw him, safe and sound. Morris was also glad to see the young man,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but he sulked when he saw Norman. Kilrain eyed Bement thoughtfully for a moment, and the detective stepped forward.

"I want to shake hands with you, young man," said Kilrain, waving the officer back. "You've done a good job dodging your own good luck."

"Dodging jail! you mean," cried Bement.

"No," said Kilrain, "not at all. I knew that you were innocent, and was coming in to help prove it. I couldn't declare your innocence to the world without implicating some one of whom I was once very fond, and so I came here to do what I could for you both. You're innocent, but some one must make a sacrifice before it can be proven to the world."

"The sacrifice has been made," said Norman, soberly, drawing an envelope from his pocket. "On his last night on earth Theodore Kilrain told the truth in writing. When he believed himself to be wounded unto death, Dawson Wilson confirmed what your brother wrote."

"And my brother is dead?" asked Kilrain.

Norman nodded, and the banker stood for a moment as one stricken with awful grief, and then turned away. The shock was a serious one, and it was a long time before he was his old self again.

"Now," said Bement, as Kilrain walked away, "perhaps you'll tell me what this all means?"

"Theodore Kilrain, the dead brother out there," said Norman, "was a good deal of a sport. The sort of sport to live on his brother and blackmail his friends. He went to the banker's office one day with Dawson Wilson and stole $100,000 in bonds. He told Wilson that his brother gave them to him, and got him to dispose of them. From that day Wilson was in his power.

"Then the dead man went with his brother to the vault one day and stole the money that you are accused of taking. The president suspected, and the brother decided to leave for Africa until the thing should blow over. But first he got a confederate to tell you that you were suspected, believing that you would flee. You did run away. He made sure of that by having his men follow you to Hammond, not to arrest you, but to be sure that you went. He thought this would set the bankers on your trail and enable him to return in a short time, free and clear. He did not want you captured, you see. He just wanted you to confess guilt by flight."

"The scheming devil!" cried Bement.

"When he decided to leave for Africa he went to Wilson, an old explorer and wild animal man. Wilson did not care to go with him, or to mix with him further, but he threatened and Wilson consented on condition that he might take Florence with him. The girl knew that you were innocent, and knew that the president of the Cosmos Trust Company was following you in with a detective. She decided to warn you, not knowing that the president was after his brother to secure a confession and save an innocent man. This confession, however, would never have been made public. The money would have been paid back to the company, and the thief would have gone free.

"I met the dead man and Wilson in New York. I told Wilson something of my plans for coming here, and it seems that he told Theodore Kilrain, who immediately planned to have my maps and charts stolen and copied. When about ready to start, knowing that he could be first on the ground, he sold a copy of the stolen maps and charts to Mr. Morris. Oh, he was a schemer, right!"

"And now that I am here," broke in Morris, "I intend to hunt for diamonds!"

"All right!" said Norman. "Go in and win! If you find any you are welcome to them for all of me."

"And now that I am here," laughed the animal hunter, "I'll see if I can get my white rhinoceros. I've been losing a good deal of time lately."

"And now, if you think the thing is cleared up sufficiently," said Norman, turning to Bement, "we'll go up to the cave where Wilson is."

His real object was to get away where he could once more examine the diamonds, at his leisure, but Bement's only idea was to get back to Florence. Both met with success, for Norman returned with the report that the gems were worth three millions of dollars, and Bement blushingly admitted that the girl in white was going back to Chicago with him!

The Normans, father and daughter, the Wilsons, father and daughter, Kilrain, the detective, and Bement all remained in the crater until Kalkenbrenner was ready to go back to Mombasa. While the big fellow hunted wild animals successfully, Morris hunted diamonds unsuccessfully. He went back with the party, very much disgusted with the trip.

On the day they left the crater, Florence showed Bement a negative.

When he tried to gain possession of it she laughed in his face and ran away.

"I know what that is," he said. "It is a photograph of the girl in white. Give it here instantly!"

"What do you want of it?" she asked.

"Why, I just want it!"

"To put in your smokingroom?"

"No, to place in the collection I have made. This shall be labeled as one of the wild animals I encountered in the jungle."

Then Bement caught her, and there is no need of continuing the scene.

"You ought to have a picture of the floating island with it," she suggested, after a pause, "and the leopard kittens!"

"I don't understand that yet," said Bement.

"Stupid!" cried the girl. "Father and I hid there for several days because Theodore Kilrain wanted to see who it was that was coming in with Kalkenbrenner. We left there the very night we displayed the signals. We knew then who was coming in, and father and uncle wanted to get away to the diamonds as quickly as possible."

"And your father knew that you were trying to warn me?"

"Certainly. He knew who stole the money, of course, and did not want to see an innocent man punished for the crime. Oh, I'm sorry for uncle!"

"Well!" said Bement, taking the girl's hand, "all we have to do now is to get back to Chicago and live happily ever after. By the time Kalkenbrenner—God bless him—has secured his wild animals, your father will be able to travel, and my wound will be healed. What about Ginger and the leopard's kittens?"

"They must go back with us, of course. Oh, you'll find me still in love with wild animals! And the graphophone I charmed the natives with, and the wild beasts, must have a place of honor in our parlor."

They tarried so long on their bridal tour that Ginger and all the rest met them on the pier at New York. And Susie and Clellie were the happiest ones of the shore party, because of the coming from Chicago of a certain young man, and because Kalkenbrenner had promised Clellie that he would never go hunting wild animals again!

When Bement tells of his trip to Africa, he begins at the mussy back room, just as the story told here does. He is a big man in the Cosmos Trust Company now, and occupies a handsome mansion on the Lake Shore drive, but he insists that the luckiest moment of his life was when the alleged friend met him on the street and informed him that he was suspected of stealing $100,000. That little talk, he says, made him a rich and happy man.

And Ginger is quite happy with Bamali, thank you, and the kittens are rolling over the parlor floor like real cats. But they'll soon be too large for that!

The end.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

BY PHILLIPS BROOKS.

The earth has grown old with its burden of care,
But at Christmas it always is young.
The heart of the jewel burns lustrous and fair,
And its soul full of music breaks forth on the air,
When the song of the angel is sung.

It is coming, old earth, it is coming tonight,
On the snow-flakes that covered thy sod,
The feet of the Christ-child fall gentle and white
And the voice of the Christ-child tells out
That mankind are the children of God.

On the sad and the lonely, the wretched and poor
The voice of the Christ-child shall fall;
And to every blind wanderer open the door
Of a hope that he dared not to dream of before,
With a sunshine of welcome for all.

The feet of the humblest may walk in the field
Where the feet of the holiest have trod,
This, this is the marvel to mortals revealed
When the silvery trumpets of Christmas have pealed
That mankind are the children of God.

IDEALS OF PEMBERTON.

Pemberton was wandering through the South as a book agent when he met Nannie Richards.

She was standing in a peach orchard. Perhaps it was the peach blossoms, perhaps it was the pretty face, or it may have been the dimity gown which caused Pemberton to fall in love with the girl.

He talked to her about the merits of his book. The girl had never seen any one so handsome before and she had never listened to any one who discoursed in such mellifluent tones.

Pemberton remained for a few days in the neighborhood and wrote a sonnet about peach blossoms and somebody in dimity who stood beneath them. The girl capitulated and they were married.

Pemberton had no definite idea what he intended to do in life. He thought that he would be willing to settle down in a clerkship. He found at the end of three years that the thirst for learning was strong within him. His head was full of unrealized ideals.

"I know how you feel," said Nannie one day. "You think that if you had not married me you might have gone to college. Me and the baby drag you down. Now, there is no use in your saying no, Jim. I know I ain't worthy of you, but——"

"Am not," said Pemberton. "Don't say ain't——"

The Pembertons had little money when they came to Horicon University. Pemberton tutored two or three youngsters in the preparatory department. He also wrote a sonnet which he sold to one of the magazines. Upon the strength of this he considered himself a literary genius.

A year went by and the summer vacation came. An ambitious young educator, with the assistance of several students, organized the Horicon University summer school.

Then it was that Pemberton's wife took a decisive step. She appeared, with books under her arm, as a student in the summer school.

For three weeks Nannie Pemberton walked every day to the institution on the hill. Then she was seen no more in the recitation rooms of the old college.

"I'm sorry," she said, "but I find that the baby takes all my time."

The next day Pemberton appeared on the scene. He attended the summer school for the rest of the term as a special student. It could never be expected that a genius should devote himself to the care of a baby that his wife might get an education.

The new college year opened. A look of discontent seemed to have settled upon Pemberton's face. He grew daily more abstracted in his manner.

"Jim," said his wife one afternoon as she came into his study, "you don't seem to be happy. You've got your mind on something."

"Sit down," answered Pemberton, and there was such condescension in his tone that the woman blushed for joy. "The fact is, Anna, I feel that Horicon is too small a place for me. I am determined to bring before the world a new American school of literature. I can do it best from the classic shades where Longfellow walked. I wish to go to Harvard."

"And you will, Jim," said his wife, as she went reverently away.

The poet nodded and did not even tell her that her grammar was faulty.

That afternoon, as far as the baby and soapsuds would permit, Pemberton's wife spent in thought. The more she meditated the more convinced was she that she had not done her full duty by her husband. She was sure that she might easily work several more hours out of the twenty-four than she had been doing.

She went to a tailor shop that afternoon and brought home a large, square-looking package. All through the winter term Pemberton's wife toiled every night until after midnight.

While Pemberton lived in cloudland a bank account in his wife's name was steadily growing. The man did not notice, as others did, that the bloom had left his wife's cheeks and that her form was bent and shrunken.

"I am not so sure," he said to her one day, "that I will be recognized during my lifetime. But of one thing I am certain, and that is that I shall have posthumous fame."

"I'll help you get it, Jim," said his wife.

A widow who made Horicon her home and had nothing to do especially, buttonholed Pemberton one morning and told him he was not doing his duty by his wife.

"You ought to get her out in society more," she said.

That is the reason that the little woman, much against her will, found herself at the next reception of Pemberton's class. She realized that her hands had become coarse and red, and that her dress did not fit. She was glad to shrink back into a corner.

She was thinking of the time when Jim would have the kind of fame with the long adjective, and he should be so happy, when she heard some one mention her husband's name. She was so far back in the corner that the two young women who were talking did not see her.

"When his turn came to give a quotation in the German class this morning," the girl with the spectacles was saying, "he proceeded to air his domestic affairs. He rolled up his eyes and quoted from Schiller's 'Song of the Bell:'"

"The passion is short and the regret is long."

"Being, as I take it," commented the girl with the yellow hair, "a public announcement of the fact that he is tired of his wife."

For days thereafter the carriage of a physician was seen before the door of Pemberton's little cottage. The news spread through the college community that in spite of all that had been done Pemberton's wife was "very low." The forces of her life seemed spent.

"Her constitution has been undermined by overwork and lack of sleep," said the physician.

"She has a broken heart," he might have said, had he only known.

Even the great epic poem, which was the corner stone of the new American school of literature, was deserted. Pemberton, face to face with the reality of life, knelt at his wife's bedside and between sobs prayed that she might be spared to him.

There came a day when Pemberton's wife felt that the end of all had come.

"Jim," she said, "I haven't forgotten about Harvard and that fame with the long name that you wanted so bad. Unbeknownst to you I have been saving money. There ought to be enough to get through a year at Harvard, allowing that it cost twice as much as it does here. Never mind about the baby. My folks has agreed to take care of him. Good-by, Jim, and God bless you."

"Don't Nan!" moaned the man as he clutched his wife's thin hand. "Can't you see that you are killing me? Come back! For God's sake, come back!"

* * * * *

Pemberton was busy in his grocery store out in Iowa the other day when he saw his own handwriting on a sheet of paper which he was wrapping about a box of axle grease.

"Hello, Nan!" he said to a bright-faced woman who had just come in. "Did you see that farmer who just went out? He's the custodian of the last remnant of the School of American Literature."

"You hadn't oughter give up your ideals, Jim, really you oughtn't," said Pemberton's wife as she looked with tender reproach into her husband's eyes.

Late Stayer Again.

"Evangeline," said the old colonel at breakfast, "er—what does that young man follow?"

"What young man, papa?" asked the blushing young lady in feigned surprise.

"Why the one that calls three nights a week and never notices the clock."

"Oh, papa, he has political aspirations. He really expects to be elected a Legislator."

"H'm. Well, tell him not to practice any all-night sessions around here."

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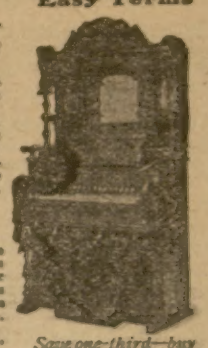

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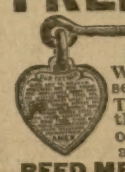

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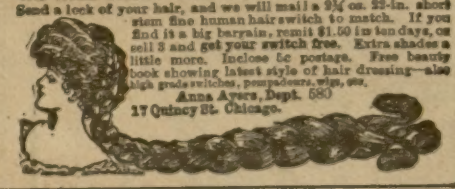

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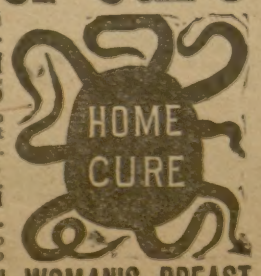

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THE MISTLETOE.

Here in her father's library,
On Christmas eve, I wait, sedately
Till Mistress Nancy comes to me—
That damsel most serene and stately.

And dangling from the chandelier
A berried spray (long since I knew it)
Seems to proclaim, "She hung me here,
I dare you—dare you—do it, do it."

Well, Christmas comes but once a year—
Less often such a chance I fancy,
So, ere you cross the room, I fear
That something may surprise you, Nancy.

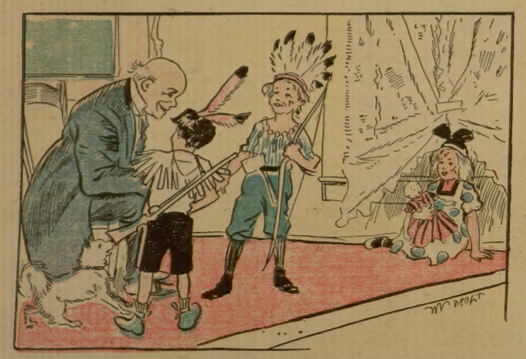
Bright Boy.

Her Father—So you want to marry my daughter, eh?
Her Suitor—That's the idea.
Her Father—What are you going to live on?
Her Suitor—I was thinking about living on you.

A Matrimonial Venture.

Blinkers—Hello, Winkers. I hear you married a woman with an independent fortune.
Winkers (sadly)—N-o; I married a fortune with an independent woman.

NOT IN IT.



"A holiday game, eh? And what is it?"
"We're playing 'Indians.'"
"Won't you let me play with you?"
"Oh, you can't be an Indian, uncle, you're already scalped."

How to Get a Big Mail.

The publishers and manufacturers of the country are anxious to get names of people, so they can send papers, samples and catalogues to them. The Agents' Director List of Indiana, Pa., publish a little book every three or four months. This book has hundreds of names and addresses in it. You can have your name published in this Agents' Directory for only 10 cents in stamps, and you will get many times the cost in the value you receive in the way of free samples and mail. Just send 10 cents in silver or stamps to the Agents Directory List, Indiana, Pa.

Well! Well!!

Santa—Now, how do they think I'm to get down a thing like that?

A Helping Hand.

Mistress (hurrying frantically)—Mary, what time is it now?
Maid—Half-past 2, mum.
Mistress—Oh, I thought it was later; I still have twenty minutes to catch the steamer.
Maid—Yis, mum, I knew ye'd be rushed, so I set the clock back thirty minutes to give yer more time.

Tales of Two Cities.

Omaha Man (proudly)—Thousands of Nebraska cows have to be milked twice a day to supply Omaha alone.
Chicago Man (loftily)—Pooh! Thousands of Illinois cows have to be milked four times a day to supply Chicago.

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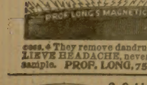

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Bright Boy.

Her Father—So you want to marry my daughter, eh?
Her Suitor—That's the idea.
Her Father—What are you going to live on?
Her Suitor—I was thinking about living on you.

A Matrimonial Venture.

Blinkers—Hello, Winkers. I hear you married a woman with an independent fortune.
Winkers (sadly)—N-o; I married a fortune with an independent woman.

An Equivocal Remark.

"Did you ever stop to think, my dear," said Mr. Micawber, gazing at his plate of lobster salad, "that the things we love most in this life are the very things that never agree with us?"
"Will you be so kind," said Mrs. Micawber, straightening up, "as to tell me whether you are speaking of the salad or of me, sir?"

Cause for Unhappiness.

"Yes, it must be a terrible thing to go through life without your limb. But you must remember it will be restored to you in the next world."
"I know it will, mum, but dat don't encourage me, for it was cut off when I was a baby, an' it won't come within a couple of foot of de ground w'en it's restored."

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

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Getting at the Facts.

Miss Knox—I hear you are talking of getting married again.
Miss Oldham—Getting married again! Why, I've never been married.
Miss Knox—Yes, I know. I said you were talking of it again.

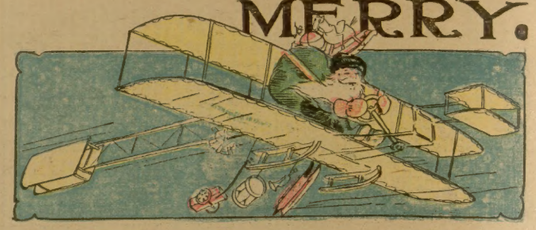
Discouraging a Poet.

Poet—When I finished that poem I was completely exhausted.
Editor—I can sympathize with you, old man. I was in the same condition when I finished reading it.

Terrible Anyway.

"They say Jones drinks terribly."
"Oh, awfully! He makes a noise like a horse!"

MERRY.



A Common Lack.

Unsuccessful Statesman—I don't seem to get along very well. What is it I lack?
His Wife—Humor.
Unsuccessful Statesman—Huh! Suppose I had a keen sense of the ridiculous, what good would that do?
His Wife—You would see your own shortcomings.

In the Wrong Place.

Grocer (answering kicker's 'phone call)—"Dry as a bone," you say? Why, sir, you must be mistaken. Those oranges I sent you were selects—the best in the store—they were raised in California, on irrigated land.
Kicker—Oh, the dickens with the irrigated land! I want irrigated oranges!

INDEED?

Be glad when it's December
And Christmas comes apace
That you are not a member
Of any sockless race.

Sour Grapes.

"Tomorrow will be my birthday," remarked the fair typewriter maid, "and I'm going to take a day off."
"Huh!" sneered the bookkeeper, who had loved and lost, "why don't you take five years off as you did the last time you had a birthday?"

An Astounded Husband.

He (after marriage)—What? You have no fortune? You said over and over again that you were afraid some one would marry you for your money.
She—Yes, and you said over and over again that you would be happy with me if I hadn't a cent. Well, I haven't a cent.

A Stirring Drama.

First Theater-goer—How was the new play last night?
Second Theater-goer—Grand! They had a big tank of real water, and one of the supes was drowned.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS.

"I don't expect ter git nothin' in it, gents, but I jest hang it up because I think it's de proper thing ter encourage and keep up der old and time honored customs."

Woman and a Bee.

"A woman is like a bee," remarked the Sageville sage.
"What's the answer?" we ask.
"Whenever I see one it suggests either honey or a sting," answered the S. S.
And after we had thought it over for a couple of days we thought we could see where the old man was right.

AN AUTUMN WAIL.

The saddest blow of tongue or pen
Is to seek your overcoat and then
Discover that it's missing, while
Your wife speaks up, with sheepish smile:
"'Twas full of moth and moldy damp—
So I gave it to a poor old tramp."

Choosing His Time.

An Irishman accosted a gentleman in the street late at night with a request for the time. The gentleman, suspecting that Pat wished to snatch his watch, gave him a stinging rap on the nose, with the remark: "It has just struck one."
"Be jabers," retorted Pat, "I'm glad I didn't ask ye an hour ago."

He Who Laughs Last, etc.

The old colored man had climbed into the dentist's chair of torture.
"Shall I give you laughing gas, uncle?" queried the tooth carpenter.
"Not till after de toof am out, boss," replied the old man. "Reckon mebby Ah'll feel mo' lake laffin' den."

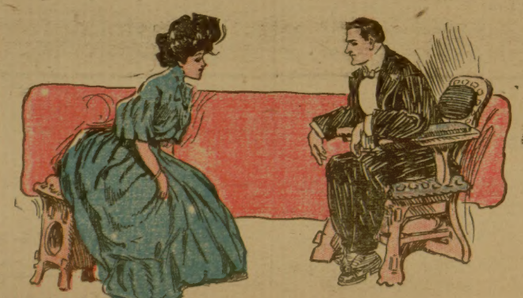
A Distressing Mistake.

Mother—What was the matter with Mr. Nicefellow tonight? He left rather early for an engaged young man.
Daughter (beginning to sob)—He—he began hugging and—and kissing me, and I—I told him that wasn't right, and he—boohoo—he stopped.

A Satisfactory Answer.

When a Scotchman answers a question he settles the matter in dispute once for all. On a certain occasion the question was asked: "Why was Mary, Queen of Scots, born in Linlithgow?"
Sandy Kerr promptly answered: "Because her mither was staying there."

TEASING.



Gerald—Suppose I give you myself for a Christmas present?
Geraldine—Why, Mr. Wisher. How would you look on our Christmas tree?

CHRISTMAS

Telling the Truth.

Mother—You been at the doughnut box again, ain't ye?
Ethel—Oh, mamma, I only ate one.
Mother—One, eh?
Ethel—Yeth; thath all there wath.

Thievery Somewhere.

Senior Partner—Keep a sharp eye on Holdfast. I'm afraid he's robbing the firm.
Junior Partner—Eh? Is he living extravagantly?
Senior Partner—Well, I passed him on the street yesterday, and he was smoking a cigar that didn't smell bad at all.

An Average Republic.

Returned Traveler—What became of Boss Mulhooly, the notorious boodler?
Citizen—He died in the penitentiary.
Returned Citizen—Served him right. And what became of Mr. Goodsoul, the reformer who exposed him?
Citizen—He died in the poorhouse.

OF COURSE.

When 'neath the mistletoe she stands
In some slight lull of talk,
If still you cannot take a hint
You ought to take a walk.

Hopeful.

Billy Sparrow—Gee! I hope they'll leave this stocking on the line till after Christmas. Santa will think it's mine and fill it full of good things, maybe.

Real Slow.

Belle—The slowest young man I ever met. We walked out on the hillside and he said I had reminded him of a beautiful autumn leaf.
Belinda—Well, that was pretty, my dear.
Belle—Yes, but the goose didn't have enough sense to say all beautiful autumn leaves should be pressed.

The Place for Them.

Jest—Of course, Noah must have taken bees with him.
Josh—Oh! certainly.
Jest—Just think how they must have stung the animals while they flew about.
Josh—Oh! I guess Noah kept them shut up in the archives.

A Sickly District.

Deacon Rumnose—Got any Doctor Nosepaint's Bitters?
Druggist (Prohibition State)—Sorry to say, deacon, I'm just out. Boss Mulhooly came in this morning and bought the last forty bottles for a ward caucus.

Change of Programme.

Wife—The Gossip Sewing Society meets this afternoon, and I'll run over for a couple of hours, if you think you can keep the baby quiet.
Smart Husband (who wouldn't hurt a fly)—Oh, I'll do it. I'll keep him quiet if I have to choke him.
Wife—On second thoughts, I don't believe I feel like sewing this afternoon. Let's go to the park.

The Passing of Bornrich.

Returned Tourist—What has become of Bornrich? He was a prince of good fellows. Everybody liked him. So genial and generous!
Resident—Oh, he's got to be a regular nuisance. Here he comes now. Let's dodge into an alleyway.
Tourist—Spent all his money, eh?

An Unprofitable Month.

President Nickel-in-the-slot Company—How were the profits this month?
Treasurer—Less than usual. The receipts were not much greater than the expenses.
President—H'm! Some of the machines must have been in order.

MOST ANYTHING.

What would you give, old graybeard,
Of wealth and hoarded gold,
Of money that you cannot use,
If you a few score years might lose
And could on Christmas day "enthuse"
Just like a "10-yer-old?"

AT 6 A. M.---"WAKE UP, DADDY! SANTY WAS HERE!"

An Accomplished American.

Wife—So Mr. Finemind has been nominated for a high office. Do you think he can command the full party vote?
Husband—Don't fear. He's all right. He can be as low down as anybody when he tries.

A Martyr to Duty.

Mrs. Greatman—Horrors! Such a looking face! You've been on a spree.
Honorable Mr. Greatman—N-o, m' dear; I've—hic—been to a con—hic—gressional funeral.

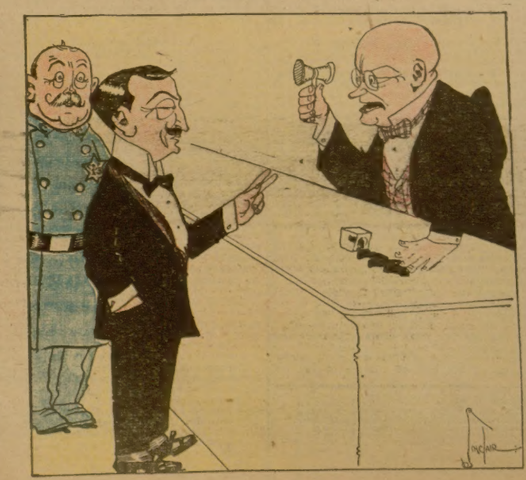
Inheritance.

"Little Miss Fetchit has very taking ways."
"That's an inheritance."
"It is?"
"Sure it is; her mother was a kleptomaniac."

Small Capital.

First Theater-goer—Mrs. de Style, who went on the stage, after a divorce scandal, has failed to make expenses.
Second Theater-goes—Well, it wasn't much of a scandal, anyhow.

HEALTH NOTE.



Mr. Askem—Is the water around here healthy?
Mrs. Tibbins—Certainly, sir; we have nothing but well water.

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CARLISLE'S CHRISTMAS EVE.

"It seems almost like the Garden of Eden," said Dorris softly as she looked about her.

Carlisle laughed. "It's a big improvement on the original," he suggested. "Eve picked one apple, and both she and Adam were evicted. Here you can pick all the oranges you can eat and it's only a shilling, including a surf bath. They didn't have surf bathing in the Garden of Eden."

"That's just like you," scolded Dorris, "spoiling it all with your materialism. It's just as lovely as though it cost lots more."

"Adam apologizes humbly," declared Carlisle. "Let's get up to the top of the hill."

Dorris turned, the frown still upon her face, but the white brow was smooth and unwrinkled as she paused at the top of the rise.

Across the blue water of the harbor the town of Nassau rose upon the hill, the Government house crowning the top. At either end of the town Charlotte and Montague guarded the entrance to the harbor just as they had in those bygone days when the guns belched fire at the enemy and the natives trembled in fear of the invasions.

Now, the forts were simple show places, a part of the quaint subtropical panorama in which only the modern hotel struck a jarring note.

"It's perfect—except for the hotel," whispered Dorris. "It's all so different from the places we know. It is almost like a new world, except for that great, ugly building."

"Look toward the east," suggested Carlisle. "Then you don't see the hotel and you can imagine the sponging fleet getting ready to go out and do battle with the enemy. You can see only the old hotel then."

"That's a part of Nassau, but the new place is a part of the Florida railway system. I wish I could get back into the past and see the old town as it was."

"Still proclaiming against the modern," chuckled Carlisle. "I don't mind admitting that I am rather glad that the hotel is here. It assures a certain definite comfort after we have come back out of the Garden of Eden and want something more substantial than oranges—and apples."

"Just fancy picking oranges off the trees the week before Christmas!" said Dorris. "It is Eden-like, Dick, you can poke all the fun you want."

It was all very different from the last time he had been with Dorris. That was at Bar Harbor, in the summer, when she had shown a preference for his society and allowed him to paddle her about to the exclusion of the other fellows. This, too, he had thought an Eden until the serpent came.

The Duc de Dennier reminded him of a serpent with his crafty ways and his insincerity of manner. The day of his arrival marked the commencement of Carlisle's despair.

Dorris had gone off with the party of which the duke formed a member aboard the Masten yacht. When Dick had seen her again in the fall, she was as pleasant as ever, but she shunned a resumption of that half-tender intimacy which had so encouraged Carlisle in the summer.

He had followed to Nassau for the winter season in the hope of regaining his lost ground, but he had made no progress. The slightest suggestion of sentiment was met by a chilling rebuff and Carlisle had adjusted himself to the new condition unwillingly enough.

Today, carried out of herself by the beauty of the spot, she was more like her old self, and when at last she rose to go Carlisle followed unwillingly enough. Across the harbor some of the charm would be lost. He caught at her arm for an instant.

"I want you to make me a Christmas promise," he pleaded. "Let me take you out on the water Christmas night. It will be better than the ball and you will have plenty of time for the ball afterward."

"I shall be glad to go," she said comprehendingly, and Carlisle took heart of grace.

Christmas day was ushered in with a salute of firecrackers that stunned the ears, and Miss Wheaton found Carlisle engaged in the pleasant occupation of setting off packs of crackers for the amusement of small darkies.

But Dick's Christmas joy came late in the day when he helped Dorris into a light boat and, with strong strokes, pulled out into the harbor. The moon rose late but the sky was thick with stars and there was just a suggestion of chill in the air that was graceful after the hot day.

Here and there above the old-fashioned houses there rose the gleaming trail of a rocket or the brilliantly colored balls of the roman candles that lighted for an instant the soft green of the palms and the dense masses of foliage. In the hotel grounds an elaborate display was being set off, but Dorris preferred to watch the smaller displays and Dick slowly pulled up the harbor.

"We might stop off at the 'Garden of Eden,' Eve," he suggested, "though the island is haunted. Blackbeard used to bury his men there."

"We would be driven from thegarden," she laughed. "It is only when there is some one there to collect the shilling that we are welcome."

"Still, I'd like to be back in Eden," insisted Dick. "You were more your old self there than you have been since Bar Harbor."

"Please don't speak of Bar Harbor," asked Dorris, and her voice grew hard again.

"This makes me think of Fourth of July night there," persisted Dick. "I suppose that is the reason I spoke. You had joined the party on Masten's yacht, so I took Dick Belding's sister out to see the fireworks and——"

"It was Bella Belding you had in your canoe?" interrupted Dorris. "Are you certain of that, Dick?"

"I saw her myself," he declared with a laugh.

"I don't mean that," said Dorris. "I mean you are certain that it was the night of the Fourth?"

"It was the only time I had her out. One never forgets an occasion like that," declared Dick.

Dorris laughed. Bella Belding's somewhat ancient affections were easily aroused and her hunt for a husband was becoming a joke in their set.

"The duke told me that it was the Spanish dancer you had with you," explained Dorris. "We passed you in our canoe. He said that was why you had refused the invitation to join our party."

"In the first place, the Spanish dancer was the attraction at Tom Bailey's dinner that night," said Carlisle. "In the second place, the duke knew it was Bella, because he helped her in the canoe when he came after his own boat. In the third and last place, I was not invited to the yacht."

"But the duke said he had delivered the invitation and that you had refused," said Dorris. "He said you had pleaded an engagement for the evening."

"Always the duke," cried Carlisle. "That should be the answer. He was trying to get me out of the way. It's not his fault that he did not succeed. That is why you——"

"I thought you preferred the dancer—and such a dancer—to me," explained Dorris.

"And now that you know how I prefer you to all the rest of the world put together," said Carlisle, "do you think that you care for me—Eve?"

Dorris turned her glowing face toward the cool shadows of their Garden of Eden. "I think so—Adam," she whispered.

Carlisle risked upsetting the boat to claim his betrothal kiss.

"My Christmas Eve," he cried.

HIS SHATTERED SWAY.

"I think I might go," she said, slipping the precious home letter under the table cover and tapping a nervous tattoo on the edge of the bread tray.

The pleasant but strikingly domineering face opposite, which had been her barometer of her conjugal privileges for three years, lengthened, visibly and the usual reply was forthcoming: "There is no necessity, so far as I can see."

This was equivalent to "You cannot go, so make up your mind to stay at home."

But this time Nellie did not shrink into timid acquiescence, as was her wont heretofore. A defiant look crept into her face, causing it to look all the more lovely for a moment.

She was about to make a sharp reply when her husband anticipated her by saying, "I am going to Delton with the fellows tonight; I can't take you, for there are no ladies invited; and, anyway, there must be some one at home to see to things."

The look of mere pouting defiance gave place to one of sudden and serene determination, and Nellie shut her lips firmly over what might have been worse than useless to say. When her husband had left the room with that characteristic flourish of his, Mrs. Cunningham put the crumpled invitation fresh from the maternal pen into the Bible and went thoughtfully upstairs.

When Nellie Arnsden married Harold Cunningham she had not imagined that his idea of a wife was that she was to be merely a household fixture; that and nothing more. She had brought to Bonnie Nook fair and sweet ideals of wifely companionship when she came as a bride. But they had flown, one by one, into the shadows before the settled, self-centered, opinionated views of its master.

The last of them disappeared months ago; the patient endurance had carried her through till now. Then suddenly impatient yearning snapped the last link; and with steady hand she brought back her hidden and vanquished ideals out of their neglected corners and set them again on their cherished pedestals.

She would bring the rule of love into the household, she said to herself. Every vestige in Cunningham of rigorous life must succumb to the new regime she was about to inaugurate.

Hastily she scribbled a note to Harold. Then she gave the servants leave for the day. She waited till they had all left the house. Then, and not till then, she tripped along the pebbled drive to the stables.

"Lanty will carry me safely," she cried, gleefully. "Won't he be surprised, though?" she added, exultantly.

If she meant the dappled pony standing quietly in his accustomed place she was correct, for he opened his eyes wide in astonishment at seeing his mistress bustling about in her riding habit.

After his surprise had worn off he was on his best behavior, scenting a new departure. Had he not eaten sugar from her hand often and often and held his delighted nose close down on her shoulder to receive her caresses? And now to carry her on his sleek, round back was surely a privilege not to be sniffed at.

But if Mrs. Cunningham had her husband in mind when contemplating the surprise, she was doubly correct.

Harold Cunningham came home somewhat earlier that evening in order to dress for the Delton dinner, and he opened his eyes much the same as did Lanty, but it is safe to say his surprise was not so agreeable.

The first thing that struck him as being strange was the dead quietness of the house. At that hour, his fond and dutiful wife Nellie was usually flitting about intent on some delicacy to tickle his palate, but tonight an utter, depressive silence reigned.

Stalking into her room he spied something dainty and white lying on the sewing table. "For me!" he cried in perplexed tone, reading his own name on the folded note. "Egad, has she left me?"

Unfolding the paper he read: "I am going over to the old home for a week. Should have been glad of your company, but no gentlemen were invited this time. Hope your dinner at Delton may be all you anticipate. NELLIE."

"Great guns!" He gave a long low whistle and felt very queer indeed, especially for a Cunningham. "No gentlemen invited this time." He stared at the note in half-angry awakening.

Time and again he had been invited by the folk at Arnsden Heights to be one of them; but he had always been "too busy" to accept for himself or even bring his wife. Something moved him to consider some things.

Suddenly it came to him that a cog in Bonnie Nook homelife had slipped and that he, in some unaccountable manner, had lost caste as the head of government.

"Egad!" he exclaimed for the second time. "I wonder how she went over?" The silent rooms had no answer, and, after a moment's deliberation, he concluded to dress for Delton and let Mrs. Cunningham have her way, seeing he could do nothing else.

"I can't tell where my studs are!" he said, furiously, as he jerked open the drawer of the dressing bureau, in his vain search.

The studs were not there, but something else caught his eye that did not fit at all well into his unpleasant mood. In spite of himself it held his attention until he was conscious of again losing his grip on the situation.

He picked up the trinket, saying: "I haven't treated her fairly," and for a whole ten minutes the little double heart of gold lettered in pearls held his thoughts; and the memory of a certain Christmas eve came warmly over his heart.

"Hang that dinner!" he said, roughly, slamming the drawer to shut away the tiny but powerful reminder. "I am not going to Delton; hang me if I do."

In the next room the first things he saw were his evening clothes all laid out ready to put on, studs and all.

Something from the long ago took possession of him, and the barometer rose.

"Of course it is all right," he assented jubilantly to the mysterious presence, "and this is a hint to follow her," touching the carefully arranged garments. "Well, I'm not too good to walk in my wife's tracks if I am Harold Cunningham." And mentally admiring Nellie's mad method, he, too, raced away to the stables.

On that memorable evening between light and dark, Mrs. Nellie Cunningham gazed out of the old home window and wondered how the note had impressed Harold.

In the midst of her musings a strangely familiar horse and a still more familiar rider came around the bend of the road by the willows. With bated breath she watched their approach until they turned into the Arnsden drive and the rider bounded from the saddle.

"It's Harold!" she gasped, and the color fled from her face. Up the steps two at a time he came as if in great haste.

Could anything have happened at Bonnie Nook, because she had not been there to "see to things?"

"I thought——" she stammered, but she stopped suddenly as he chimed in, "So did I, Nellie, and I've thought a good deal since 3 o'clock. I have given up the Delton dinner to bring you a little gift."

The light of the hall lamp fell squarely on Harold Cunningham's face as he turned toward his wife, and the smile it wore burst the barometer into a million atoms.

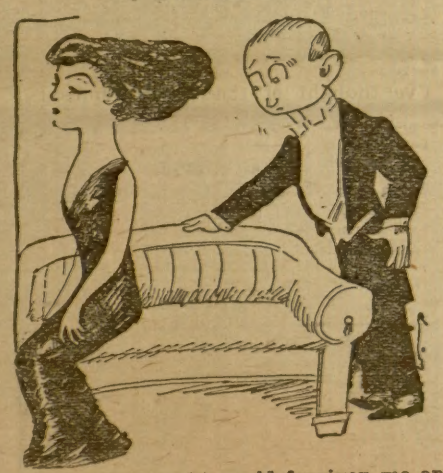
"Yes, Nellie," he continued, "I came even if I was not invited, but then I have not been a gentleman, either. I've come as a sort of prodigal."

Mrs. Cunningham saw prophetically the ideals bowing in pantomime and smiling in recognition of the self-invited penitent—but she only said, "I don't quite understand, Harold."

"Neither do I," he replied, seriously and gently as he took her hands in his own eager palms. "But I brought the best gift I am capable of giving, Nellie," and his tones were loverlike, as of old.

"I have brought you a model husband, one who will think oftener of his wife than of himself. The old Harold Cunningham has gone into the waste basket; behold the new edition! How do you like it? Will you accept the gift, Nellie?"

Different.



He—But I thought you'd forgiven me and promised to forget it.

She—Yes, but I didn't promise to let you forget I'd forgiven it.

Ever of Thee.

Peter Lamb plays a little on the bugle, and he went into the parlor the other night in the dark and felt over the top of the piano for the horn. It happened that his aunt from Penn's Grove had been there that day and had left her brass ear trumpet lying on the piano, and Peter got hold of this without perceiving the mistake, as the two were of similar shape. He took it in his hand and went out on the porch where Miss Mills was sitting talking to his sister. He asked Miss Mills if she was fond of music on the horn, and when she said that she adored it, he asked her how she would like him to play "Ever of Thee," and she said that was the only tune she cared anything for.

Then Peter put the small end of the trumpet to his lips and blew. He blew and blew. Then he blew some more, and then he drew a fresh breath and blew again. The only sound that came was a kind of hollow moan, which sounded so queerly in the darkness that Miss Mills asked him if he was not well. And when he said he was, she said he breathed exactly like a second cousin of hers that had the asthma.

Then Peter remarked tha somehow the horn was out of order for "Ever of Thee," but if Miss Mills would like to hear "Sweetly I Dreamed, Love," he would try to play it; and Miss Mills said that her fondest recollections clustered about that melody.

So Peter put the trumpet to his lips again and strained his lungs severely in an effort to make some music. It wouldn't come, but he made a very singular noise which induced Miss Mills to ask if the horse in the stable back of the house had heaves.

Then Peter said he thought somebody must have plugged the bugle up with something, and he asked his sister to light the gas in the hall while he cleaned it out. When she did so the ear trumpet became painfully conspicuous, and both the girls laughed. When Miss Mills laughed Peter looked up with pain in his face, put on his hat and went out into the street where he could say over some sensational language to himself. He is courting another girl now, and learning to play the piano.

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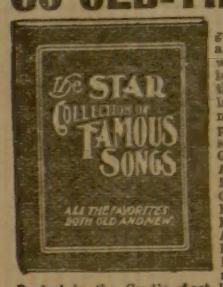

This book contains sixty of the greatest songs in the world. They are old-time songs and are printed with words and music. The collection includes ballads and songs that have been written during the last fifty years. It also contains national hymns. Space will not permit us to give a list of all the songs. Here are some of them. Good Night, Ladies; My Bonnie, Auld Lang Syne, John Brown, Maryland, Dixie, Yankee Doodle, Old Folks at Home, Old Cabin Home, Kentucky Home, Massa's in De Cold Ground, Bonnie Doon, Annie Laurie, Highland Mary, Robin Adair, Douglas, Warrior Bold, Killarney, America, Britannia, Wacht am Rhein, Last Night, Rocked in the Cradle, Last Rose, Stilly Night, Gloaming, Old Oaken Bucket, Juanita, Then You'll Remember Me. You may be assured that this is the greatest collection of music ever offered for the price. We send these sixty songs, words and music, to everyone who sends 10 cents in stamps. Address Star Library, 500 Dearborn Ave., Chicago.

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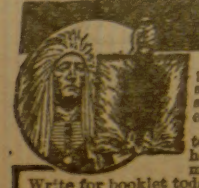

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Pickled Peppers

Rube Waddell's Vain Hope.

"Rube" Waddell, who sometimes pitches ball and sometimes defends divorce suits, had a finger badly hurt when he was new as a baseball player, and a doctor was called to attend to it. The surgeon was cheerful and insisted that after a little rest the finger would be as good as ever.

"Sure of that?" asked the Rube.

"Sure as can be," said the doctor.

"Will I be able to play the piano?"

"Certainly."

"I am mighty glad of that," answered the lefthander. "I have tried to play it for ten years and haven't struck a tune yet."

Settled.

Bill—Say, Jim, what do automobiles carry life presarvers fer?

Jim—Aw, it's because a good many of them owners get into deep water before they pay fer the machines.

The Matter of an Allowance.

"My dear," whispered the young man, "as we are so soon to be married, we should take a practical view of life, and profit by the mistakes of others. For instance, there is the subject of a regular allowance every week for spending money, you know."

"Oh, I've thought of that," she replied sweetly.

"Have you?"

"Yes, indeed. Hundreds and hundreds of times, and lately I haven't thought of much else."

"Eh?"

"Yes. Your income is two thousand dollars, isn't it?"

"Yes; and I want it to go as far as possible toward your happiness."

"Of course. Well, I've talked it over with mamma, and she thinks an allowance of one dollar a week will be plenty."

"Indeed?"

"Oh, yes. You can walk to the office, you know, and carry your lunch, you know, and so you can use the whole dollar for cigars, and neckties, and things."

Some Fatherly Advice.

The following was sent by a countryman to his son in college not many years ago:

"My Dear Son: I write to send you two pairs of old breeches, that you may have a new coat made of them. Also some new socks, which your mother knit by cutting down some of mine. Your mother sends you ten dollars without my knowledge, and for fear you will not spend it wisely I have kept back half and only send five. Your mother and I are well, except your Sister Annie has got the measles, which we think would spread among other girls, if Tom had not had them before, and he is the only one left. I hope you are well, and will do honor to my teachings. If you do not you are an ass, and your mother and myself are your affectionate parents."

Couldn't Get Even.

Hewitt—I'll publish you!

Jewett—You have the advantage of me; you're unfit for publication.

Georgie's Lesson.

"Pa," said little George, when his father attempted to carve the Sunday duck, "I can't tell a lie. I dulled the carving knife."

"My son," said Georgie's father, after looking gravely at him for a few minutes, "I am glad to forgive you. Let me explain why I forgive you. It is because you have not tried to deceive me. You have told the truth. Therefore you shall not suffer punishment. I wish to have you realize that it is always better to tell the truth. You see how easy it is. If you had lied to me about having dulled the knife it would have been very hard for you to keep from letting us find out the truth—indeed, we should have found it out sooner or later, and then you would have been punished. Thus you would have been made very unhappy in addition to having been compelled to invent a lot of falsehoods, which would have been very hard work. A liar always creates trouble and sorrow for himself. Remember that. How did you happen to dull the knife?"

"I was tryin' to whittle off one of the limbs of that tree you had set out in the back yard, 'cause it's got a nice prong for a slingshot."

"George, you can come into the attic with me. By thunder, I'll teach you not to cut limbs from trees that I've paid good money to have planted!"

His Privilege.

"Is Mrs. Clarissa Spudds in the room?" asked the medium who was conducting the seance.

A lady who sat back near the door sat up.

"I am Mrs. Clarissa Spudds," she said in firm, clear tones.

"There is a man here who wishes to speak to you. He says his name is William. Do you know any one by that name who has crossed over?"

"William was the name of my husband," Mrs. Spudds answered.

"Ah! Yes. He says he was your husband. He appears to be very anxious to say something—to convey a message to you. Is there anything in particular that you wish to ask him?"

"No," said Mrs. Spudds. "I can't think of anything just now. There is, of course, a great deal that I would like to know about his condition over there, but I suppose he would not be able to tell me. They never are."

"He says he can tell you one thing about his condition where he is now. Shall I ask him to do so?"

"If—if you please," the lady replied, with a little gasp of mingled fear and surprise.

"He tells me to say to you that where he is now he is permitted to smoke all the time and nobody seems to be in the least afraid that it may effect his nerves or become a more expensive habit than he ought to indulge in."

Given Away.

Visitor—Bobby, is your sister in?

Bobby—Just ring the bell and ask the maid; she's paid for lying. I ain't.

No Pajamas for Him.

"The late Col. A. K. McClure was a brilliant raconteur," said a veteran Clover club man, according to the Philadelphia Bulletin. "I'll never forget his pajama story.

"Col. McClure told this story at a Clover club dinner in the old Bellevue of Philadelphia. It was a story about the Spanish war:

"There was a regiment, it seems, recruited from Conshohocken, Cinnaminson, Wawa and Manunka Chunk, and the ladies of those Pennsylvania towns got together after the regiment's departure and made a lot of pajamas for the soldiers. Pajamas were a new thing in those days; smart, exclusive, and so forth; the ordinary man wore a nightshirt.

"Well, these pajamas, in a half-dozen big packing cases, went duly Cubawards, but no word of their arrival ever came back. The ladies waited about a month. Then they wired to the Colonel, a genial, wnole-souled Conshohockener:

"'Anxious to know if you got the pajamas last month.'

"The Colonel had never heard of pajamas. He wired back:

"'Story is a lie out of whole cloth, probably fabricated by enemies to ruin me politically. Admit am not total abstainer, but never had pajamas last month or any other time.'"

John Gets Back.

She stood there and glared at him.

"And you mean to stand there and ask me to press your trousers?" she demanded with all the sternness she could muster.

"Why, certainly, my dear," responded Mr. Stubb, affably; "is that asking too much?"

"Well, I should say it is, John Henry Stubb. I'd have you know that when you married me you did not marry a sadiron."

That evening his turn came.

"John, dear," chirped Mrs. Stubb just after supper, "I wish you would do me a favor before you go. Button my waist up in the back, that's a good man."

But Mr. Stubb merely puffed his cigar and chuckled softly.

"Nay! Nay! Maria. I would have you know when you accepted me you did not say 'Yes' to a buttonhook."

And, picking up his cane, he strode out.

Would Be Cruel.

Ella—Pa says they are tinkering with the tariff.

Stella—Yes, it will be just my luck to have them raise the duty on foreign noblemen before I get one.

A Near Neighbor.

A noted divine in Washington was constantly urging his flock to be more sociable and to give a hearty welcome to "the stranger within the gates," not forgetting to maintain a proper interest in the members of their own households. After one of his most effective sermons on his pet theme he went to the door as usual and began to shake hands industriously with the people passing out after the services.

He was much interested in a well-dressed and intelligent looking young girl, apparently a stranger, and greeted her heartily.

"I hope we may see you often here," he said. "We always have a warm welcome for new faces."

"Thank you, sir," she replied modestly.

"Do you live hereabout?" he went on.

The girl looked at him with a puzzled smile. "Yes, sir, I do."

"Will you kindly leave your address, and my wife and I will call on you some evening?" he said.

"You would not have to go far to find me—I am your cook."

His Charity.

He was poor, but otherwise honest, and he had just proposed to the heiress.

"Are you sure," she queried after the manner of her kind, "that you do not want to marry me for my money?"

"Of course I don't," he replied. "I am anxious to marry you because I haven't the heart to let you become an old maid merely because you happen to have a paltry half million."

A Way Out.

Leading Man—Darling, since your rich aunt cut you off in her will if you marry an actor I will not be so selfish as to press you to keep our engagement.

Society Bud—But, Harold, dear, we can easily get over that. You know all the critics say you are not an actor.

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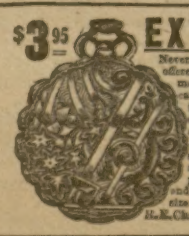

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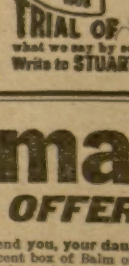

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CHAPTER XII.
A LITTLE WITCH.

AFTER that the post loungers had the good sense to leave our young friends alone, though when they sauntered away most of them either thanked Cuthbert in a courteous French manner for his little treat, or else waved a hand at him, with a broad grin that stood for the same thing in the rough ways of their class.

Still, Owen asked no questions concerning what they had seen and heard when at the office of the old factor; it looked as though he were determined to exhibit not a sign of curiosity, no matter how much he would like to hear all.

So Cuthbert took it upon himself to relate much that had been said, even to the remark made by Mr. Gregory with relation to Owen himself—watching out of the corner of his eye, he saw the other turn rosy red, and then grit his teeth firmly, as though repressing his feelings.

"Evidently he will have to be drawn out, for I can see that nothing tempts him to open up of his own free will; and yet he said a while back that he meant to confide his story to us. Now, this thing has gone quite far enough, and if we are to be Owen's best friends and chums it's only right that we know who and what he is, and also how he and the Big Mogul have fallen out. So here goes while the coast is clear, and no stragglers around."

So saying, Cuthbert turned to the Canuck and smiling, said:

"Owen, my boy, you promised to tell us something about your troubles when an opportunity came. Now, I said then that I didn't want to intrude on your private affairs, but you insisted that we had a right to know; and since we've taken you into the combine as a fellow chum, and you're going to wander with me over a good part of this old planet in time, why, if it's just the same to you, I wouldn't mind hearing all you've got to say now. I confess our coming to this place has excited my curiosity, old chap, because I realize that there's been trouble of some sort between you and Aleck over yonder. Now, he strikes me as not so bad a tyrant as I had somehow imagined, and perhaps the matter might be patched up between you. Remember, we don't want to hear anything that you'd prefer to keep secret—just tell us as much or as little as you think fit. You know we stand ready to give our full sympathy, and back you up to the limit. Now, hit it up, my boy."

Owen drew a big breath, as though he had to nerve himself to speak of these things to strangers; for he had hugged his troubles to his own breast these many years, and they had evidently become sensitive subjects with him.

But the ready sympathy which he saw upon the countenances of his comrades was a new sensation to the lonely lad, and he had no further hesitation about opening his heart to them.

"Don't make any mistake in the start, boys, for the trouble that lies between Alexander Gregory and myself can never be patched up, though if he had his way it would be. But I can never forget that his iron will embittered the whole of my poor mother's life. I've seen her cry many the time, and under my breath I cursed that hard-hearted old Scotchman, who, because his daughter married a man against whom he chanced to have a spite, refused to forgive. He's a cold-blooded monster, that's what he is, and I would tell him so to his face."

"I suspected that he bore that relationship to you—grandfather—there's considerable about your faces that gives the secret away," remarked Cuthbert.

"I may look like him in face, but thank Heaven I'm a true Dugdale in my feelings. I know you'll forgive me if I make the story short, because it rouses up the old feelings inside, and sad memories always make me hate him more and more. After my mother and father died, which was less than a year ago, he heard of it somehow, and has tried to make up with me ever since, sending messengers with letters, asking me to come and live with him; but his repentance came too late, for she was not here to know that he was sorry; and I utterly refused to even hold any correspondence with the man who would have let his own child go hungry or freeze to death because she would not come and ask his forgiveness, something my father would never hear of.

"Well, what do you think, finding that I wouldn't come to him of my own free will, this domineering ruler of the Saskatchewan sent a party of his halfbreeds up to the region where I was trapping and kidnaped me outright—yes, I was carried a prisoner in their boat to this post, and actually confined in a cabin as if I had been guilty of a crime. He had the nerve to send me word that it had all been done without his knowledge, his men thinking they were doing him a favor, and that he would see me in the morning, when he hoped explanations might bring about an understanding between us—if I persisted in my determination to have nothing to do with him, I would then be at liberty to depart.

"I never so much as sent him an answer, I was so furious at being dragged to his post like a wretch who had robbed traps; but during the night I found a way to escape from the cabin, and taking an old canoe, I fled down the river. The rest you know already. That is my story in a nutshell, boys. I could talk for hours, and even then fail to tell you all I've gone through since I was a little shaver, for I soon learned the sad story of my mother, and how she had suffered because her father refused to forgive. My father was only a timber-cruiser, a man with little education, but an honest man at that. He was never able to make much more than a living, and we have many times gone hungry, while he was storing up treasures year by year, to be lavished upon his one other daughter, who married to please him. But we'd rather died there in the bush than ask a favor of him, my dad was that proud, and hated Alexander Gregory so for his injustice.

"You understand now what I risked in coming back here; but when I reasoned it all out in cold blood I saw that he could not keep me against my will, for he's never been appointed my guardian that I know of; so I determined to come, and stick with you, no matter what happened."

"You mentioned another daughter—is she with him still?" asked Cuthbert, who had a reason for the question.

"No, I understand that she was also taken away several years ago; her husband turned out to be a bad man, and had to get out of the country, because Mr. Gregory had sworn to shoot him on sight for good reasons. So, you see, that stubborn will of his, that wanted to bend everything his way, has not brought him very much of happiness. Still, it's just what he deserves, and I'm not sorry one bit."

"Did the other daughter have any children?" pursued Cuthbert.

"I don't know; but what makes you ask?" said Owen, raising his eyes quickly, to look his comrade in the face.

"Because, unless I am very much mistaken I heard a girl's laugh in that big cabin where he has his home, a merry laugh that somehow made me feel as if I wanted to join in with a ha-ha of my own. If that is so she's your cousin, Owen."

That was indeed a master stroke on Cuthbert's part, and well played, too.

Owen looked startled.

"Cousin—a girl—related to me," he muttered, as if unable to quite grasp the immensity of the thing; then a flush crept over his swarthy face, as though the new thought was more or less pleasing to him; for, poor lad, he had of late believed himself to be utterly alone in the big world, saving this hard-hearted grandfather, whom he refused to recognize.

This gave him new food for reflection; and the young philosopher who had shot the shaft fancied that the intelligence might have more or less influence in determining his future relations with the factor—the human heart craves sympathy above all things, and this can seldom come so well from strangers as from those of the same family—blood is ever thicker than water.

Owen went about the preparations for the night, arranging the cots for his two comrades, and his own humble blanket bed; but evidently he was wrapped in deep thought, and Cuthbert believed he had set a current in motion that was bound to have much influence over the other's future.

If he could only arrange to have Owen meet the owner of that merry laugh, he fancied the rest would be easy.

With this idea in his mind he sauntered in the direction of the factor's headquarters, half-meaning to secure another interview with the other, at which, perhaps, matters might be threshed out, and light let in where all was darkness now.

He changed his mind, however, when he saw that Mr. Gregory was busy with some of his employes, who had come down the river in a big batteau while the boys were eating their supper, and evidently had brought news of considerable importance, since they immediately sought an interview with the chief; and when Cuthbert glanced in through the open door their heads were close together over some sort of a map which one of them was explaining.

Nevertheless Cuthbert could not refrain from keeping his eyes about, in the hope that by a lucky chance he might discover the one who laughed; and just as he was about to turn back to the camp of his friends he did catch a sound that immediately fastened his attention, only instead of merriment, it was rather a lugubrious little song, sung half-under the breath—a song that possibly had the power to bring before the mind of the little singer the face of the dear mother who had taught her to sing it, a song that affected even Cuthbert as he stood with bowed head and harkened.

Presently the sound ceased, and he heard a flutter near by, when looking that way he caught a glimpse of a little figure passing into the rear of the cabin; as the door was open he could see what appeared to be a girl of some six or seven, slight of figure, and with the golden hair and the face of an angel.

Cuthbert laughed to himself as he looked, for he was thinking of his friend Owen, and what a change would come over him when he made the acquaintance of this little fairy of the wilderness.

He now sauntered over to where some of the trappers and voyageurs had a fire, at which they had evidently cooked their supper earlier in the night, and about which they were now reclining, smoking pipes, and exchanging stories connected with the wild life led by all.

No one paid any particular attention to the lad, save to give him a place at the fire, and offer him a tobacco pouch, which, of course, he declined, saying to the amazement of these inveterate smokers that he had never learned the art of indulging in the weed.

He understood enough of the French patois to follow what was said, and felt more or less interest in the weird tales they spun concerning the astonishing wonders of the Great Lone Land, which he, in his audacity, had been tempted to venture into alone, bent on exploration—he realized now that it would surely have proven his tomb had he been allowed to proceed thither, convoyed only by the faithful Eli, who was ready to follow him to the uttermost parts of the earth without question.

Presently, when he had broken the ice by becoming a little familiar with his neighbor on the right, a rather pleasant-faced fellow in the picturesque uniform of the Hudson Bay Company, he ventured to ask about the sweet little singer, whose voice had charmed his ear; and as he suspected, it turned out that she was a child of the factor's younger daughter, her name Jessie, (which was Scotch enough to please Cuthbert's romantic fancy) and that she had always been at the post, a gleam of sunshine, for whom any of them would willingly have died.

CHAPTER XIII.
OWEN'S BATTLE WITH HIMSELF.

Cuthbert was more than pleased with his discoveries; for he believed that it would after all not be so very difficult to bring about some sort of a reconciliation between the young Canadian and his ancestor, the old factor, whose heart had lost much of its flinty nature long since under the ministrations of this little golden-haired witch, and was really hungering to remedy his conduct of the past, as far as possible.

If he did nothing more than joining these two, Cuthbert could congratulate himself that his mission to the great Saskatchewan region had not been in vain.

He hunted Eli up at once, determined to form some sort of plan whereby such a desirable end might be attained.

Fortunately Eli was alone in their tent, and when the other questioned him before speaking, not wishing Owen to hear them discussing his affairs, Cuthbert learned that the third member of the party had gone out quite a while before, saying that he would return by the time they were thinking of retiring.

Cuthbert fancied that it was the mention of the little cousin that had affected him so; perhaps even at that moment Owen was hovering about the headquarters of the factor, in the hope of getting a glimpse of the owner of the sweet voice.

So Eli was placed in possession of all the facts as learned by his chum, and as of old they discussed the situation; for while the boy from the lumber regions lacked the education and polish that were Cuthbert's birthright, he did possess a shrewd mind, and had homely ideas of what was good and true—this had been the very thing that attracted the Virginian to him in the start, and the more he saw of Eli the stronger grew his affection, until it bade fair to become another David and Jonathan relationship.

On his part Eli was more excited than usual, because he had made a discovery while talking to one of the voyaguers during his friend's absence; which was to the effect that there was a place not a day's journey from the post where such specimens as the other showed, indicated a rich vein of copper.

This was Eli's hobby, it must be remembered, and the possibility of his running across a streak of luck thus early in the campaign gave him great joy.

Cuthbert had dismissed all thoughts of ill-feeling toward the treacherous Dubois from his mind; since the scheme, whatever it might have been, had not panned out worth a cent, he could afford to let the matter drop.

He had about come to the same conclusion as Owen, which was to the effect that it had been arranged with Stackpole to keep an eye on the outfit until the young and foolhardy explorers had gone far beyond the pale of civilization, when Dubois was to join forces with the lanky timber-cruiser, and between them they would manage to squeeze as big a sum as possible out of Cuthbert as ransom money, though perhaps they meant to be wise enough not to commit themselves in any manner so that the Canada law could seize upon them.

When they had partly arranged this intended plan of action, and fixed matters so that on the morrow they could open the game, the two young conspirators began to get ready for turning in.

There was certainly no need of keeping watch here, for they were in the stockade bounds of the fort, and within a biscuit-toss of the factor's headquarters; surely no prowler would dare molest them here; and if he did there would always be the chance of his running up against a 30-30 from the forceful little Marlin repeater that must discourage his sneaking propensities.

Where could Owen be?

Surely the boy would not sneak away, after so boldly accompanying them to the Hudson Bay post—he had as much as promised to stick by them up to the time they expected to return to civilization; and if Cuthbert was any judge of human nature Owen Dugdale was not the one to go back on his word.

And it was very unlikely that anything could have happened to him off in the dense forest, where he was so much at home—the men connected with the post were now aware that the factor frowned upon such a thing as kidnaping one who showed the utmost reluctance to visit his relative, and consequently they would leave him severely alone from this time on; and as for the timber-cruiser, he knew the bond of blood existing between the lad and the stern old factor, and with the inevitable consequences staring him in the face if he raised his hand again foward Owen, he would not dare arouse the ire of Alexander Gregory for anything.

Somehow Cuthbert could not get to sleep.

He was constantly thinking of Owen, and his fortunes, weaving castles in the air that might be fulfilled, providing the sturdy young Canuck could be convinced that it was right and proper for him to become reconciled with his grandfather, and let bygones be forgotten.

So an hour or two passed.

Cuthbert finally arose and cast his blanket aside, for he had not made use of his sleeping bag on this night.

Stepping out of the tent he looked around; the night was fair and not a sign of trouble could be detected in atmosphere or sky, for the heavenly monitors shone overhead with their usual brilliancy, and there was not much of a tang in the drowsy night wind.

Cuthbert thought it suspiciously quiet, knowing how it often grows calm before a storm.

Really he was beginning to feel worried a bit about the non-appearance of Owen, when he caught the soft sound of footsteps, and the object of his solicitude appeared close by.

"Hello, keeping watch?" he asked, a little surprised to find one of his companions up and looking around.

"No, I just happened to wake up, and not finding you in the shack, crept out to take a peep around, and see if there was any sign of your coming. I had begun to fear our mutual friend, Mr. Stackpole, might have waylaid you, old fellow; but now I see I was wrong. You've been taking a bit of exercise no doubt—didn't get enough on our way here, eh? It did me up, all right, and I was glad to drop down and rest. Now you're in camp I'll resume my nap," answered Cuthbert, leaving it to the other as to whether he wanted to explain.

Owen seemed a trifle confused, but he was a straightforward fellow, and without a trace of guile in his make-up.

"To confess the truth, Cuthbert, I hung around for a long time, to get a glimpse of that little cousin you spoke of, and fortune was kind enough to let me see her several

"Here she is, grandfather, safe and sound."

times. Just as you say she looks like a fairy, and somehow made me think of a picture I have of my mother when she was young. And while I'm about it I might as well own up that the sight of her, together with the thoughts swarming into my mind, caused me to wander off into the woods, where alone I could fight the whole thing out, and come to such a conclusion as the mother I loved would have had me do. It's been a hard tussle, I tell you, but I think I've won out," he said, with a quiver in his voice; and it was easy to see that the lad had been recently racked by emotions that for some time he had succeeded in keeping under restraint—the sight of the child reminding him so of the fond parent whom he had lost, had brought these things trooping into his mind.

Cuthbert understood better than words could have told him what the nature of that battle under the stars must have been; and to show his sympathy for this new but dear chum he impulsively thrust out his hand and gripped that of Owen.

"I'm awful glad to know it—say no more, old fellow, for I can give a pretty good guess how it turned out. Come, tumble into your blankets and get some of your beauty sleep. There's another day coming, when I hope all of these twists and misunderstandings may be smoothed out, and everything look bully. Now, crawl in and feel for your nest—it's on the side to the right, first blanket."

Owen was accustomed to turning in all standing, as a sailor would say—that is, with simply pulling off his boots or moccasins, whichever he chanced to be wearing; for a life in the woods does not allow of the customary preparations for bed; even the other two boys only removed their outer garments, though when the weather had been milder Cuthbert had indulged in the delight of pajamas; but the first frost had chilled his ardor in that line, and he had gradually come to copying Eli, who had the habits of the loggers of the great Michigan woods, and waived all ceremony.

When ten minutes had passed Cuthbert fancied from the regular breathing that came from the spot where the Canadian lad lay that he was far along the road to the Land of Nod; and giving a satisfied grunt, he himself turned over, to let himself slip away on the tide.

Those who spend much time in the woods, and sleep in camps, are restless during the night, and rarely sleep through without once or twice arousing, lifting their head to listen through habit or caution, or even crawling out to renew the fire. True, there was no need of these things now with our boys; but nevertheless Cuthbert seemed to rest under the impression that it would not be a good thing to break a settled habit; and so along about one o'clock in the morning he poked his head out of the tent to take a perfunctory look around; just as an old and tarry sailor, from habit, jerks his head up while passing along the street of a city, not so much to survey the skyscrapers that tower above him, but from sheer habit of glancing aloft at the shivering sails of the old hooker upon which he labors twenty hours of the day.

He found that the sky was covered with clouds, and there was beginning to be quite some wind—indeed, it may have been a corner of the tent which was whipping monotonously in each rising gust that had aroused him.

Anyhow, he bent down and secured the flapping end, so that it would not awaken the others with its antics; after which he took another survey of the situation, and again crawled under cover, convinced that by tne dawn they might anticipate a storm of some kind.

It was a bit pleasant to know that they were now in such a decent sort of shelter, and could keep quite dry, no matter how the rain came down; and if it so happened that the first real touch of winter was sprung upon them, why surely it would not be hard to keep cozy, with plenty of wood to burn, and a storehouse so close at hand, from which any amount of provisions could be obtained, since he possessed the "open sesame" in the way of cash.

He thought he heard Owen move as he crawled back into the tent again, but was not quite positive; and he did not want to arouse both of the others, in case they were asleep, by asking questions.

The last he remembered after that for some time was of lying there and listening to the increasing moan of the wind among the tops of the great hemlocks that stood close by the corner of the stockade; it seemed after a time like a lullaby soothing him to sleep, for Cuthbert was too old a hand at this sort of game to allow himself to grow nervous over the coming of a little whirl, such as this no doubt would prove to be.

Then he lost consciousness, and slept heavily, unmindful of the wind, the mournful hoot of a great Northern owl in the dead tree near by, or even the howls of big gray timber wolves grown bold with the nearness of winter.

CHAPTER XIV.

AT DEAD OF NIGHT.

Some one, violently shaking him, brought Cuthbert once more to his senses, and he aroused to the fact that it was Eli, who kept shouting in his ear:

"Wake up—wake up, there's the dickens to pay—pile out and help, old man—they need us bad—get up, I say, get up!"

That was certainly quite sufficient to thoroughly arouse any one, no matter if he had been a sluggard, and surely Cuthbert could never be called that; so, with a toss of the blankets, he scrambled to his feet; then, remembering that he was in his socks, he hastened to snatch up his boots and pull them on.

All this only took a few seconds of time, but during the brief period Cuthbert was dazed with the awful clamor that was making the welkin ring without; for it seemed as though every known sound had been accumulated to help carry out the idea that Gabriel was blowing his last trumpet, with the end of the world close at hand.

He knew men were shouting madly, and from the voices it was plain that those who thus gave tongue were both Cree Indians and Canadian voyageurs; for the latter had gone back to their French tongue with the advent of excitement—then it struck the Virginia lad that another sound which he had heard was very much along the line of the roaring flames, and immediately the conviction forced itself upon him that in some manner the forest close by had been fired, perhaps by some enemy of the factor, such as Dubois or Stackpole, and that there was danger of the conflagration leaping the barrier and attacking the houses within the compound.

No sooner had he thrust his nose outside the tent than he gave utterance to an exclamation of mingled surprise and consternation.

It was a fire all right, but not of the species he had suspected—the roaring sound was produced by the wind whipping the flames into an angry flood; but it was hewn timber, not erect trees, that were ablaze,

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one of the houses, in fact, with an end a seething mass of flames.

Cuthbert knew not what to think, save that possibly some enemy had done this; but he was quick to lend his aid to save whatever the contents might be.

Accordingly he hastened in that quarter.

Already he had discovered that while he slept a storm had swept down upon the region of the Saskatchewan, and was howling through the forest and over the waters with demoniac glee, though as yet not a drop of rain had fallen, or a flake of snow descended, though one or the other must come in time.

But that mad breeze was a bad thing for a fire, since it would whip the flames until they tore loose from all human control, to carry ruin in their train.

Cuthbert was not alone in his rush toward the burning building, since from various directions human figures were to be seen centering in that quarter; for the employes of the fur company were certainly loyal, and willing to do all that men might in order to save property or lives.

At first Cuthbert imagined that it was the storehouse, and while the burning of its contents might cause some inconvenience, there was still time to replenish the stock before winter set in fully, so that it seemed to be only a question of a money loss at the most.

But as he advanced, his eyes trying to pierce the cloud of smoke that hung all about the burning building, he began to sense the import of the wild cries that were being uttered about him, a Cree shouting to a voyageur, or it might be one of the French halfbreeds to a fellow; and as the nature of their shouts broke in upon his intelligence he felt a new thrill of alarm.

It was not the store building, but the residence portion that was afire; and Cuthbert remembered like a flash that the little cousin of Owen had her quarters there, as well as the old factor.

He looked around hurriedly, expecting to see both close by; but to his horror failed to do so.

What could it mean—where was the sturdy head of the post, the Scotchman, who, despite his age, had seemed to the boys so like an oak—was it possible, after all, there could be something fiendish back of this conflagration, and that Alexander Gregory had been first of all stricken in his house before the match was applied?

It was an awful thought, enough to make Cuthbert's blood run cold; but before he could communicate his fears to any one he heard a roar as of a lion, and saw the factor come tumbling through smoke and flame—he rolled over upon the earth once or twice, while the Virginia lad fairly held his breath in suspense, fearing that the valiant old chap might have received his death wound while battling with the flames; then, to the delight of Cuthbert, the factor struggled to his feet and began to hobble around as if he had a broken leg, meanwhile, shouting out orders in that fog-horn voice that made men spring to obey.

But the little one—where was she—the factor evidently believed Jessie must have come forth some time back, for he was not ordering the men to try and save the stricken building, but to devote their energies toward keeping the flames away from the storehouse.

Even as Cuthbert watched as in a dream, he saw the factor try to walk, but immediately fall down, to be assisted to his feet again by a couple of the men.

Then came a flying figure up to his side—it was Owen, who had once vowed never to speak to this relative again so long as he lived, but whom Cuthbert knew had just recently repented of this resolution, and was ready to meet his grandfather half-way, in the morning.

He seemed to seize upon the old man and shout something at him—just what it was Cuthbert could not hear, so furious was the whoop of the wind and the roar of the sweeping flames; but he guessed it to the dot; for he knew beyond a doubt that the Canadian lad was demanding to be told where the girl slept, for she had not been seen since the fire broke out.

Old Gregory became a frantic man on the spot, for his whole life was wrapped up in the little fairy; he tried to rush forward himself, but went down in a heap, struggled to his knees, with Owen gripping his arm fiercely, and continuing to shrill that question into his ear, until at last in despair the old factor thrust out his hand and with quivering finger pointed at the end of the burning domicile, being utterly unable to frame a single word, speech failing him.

It was quite enough for Owen.

Like an arrow shot from the bow he sped straight into the smoke and flame.

Cuthbert gave a gasp, and feared he had seen the last of his new chum; but he felt a thrill of admiration because of the daring act—it was worth while to realize that his first estimation of the Canadian lad had been correct, and that when the occasion called for an exhibition of valor Owen had risen to meet it in a way that must excite admiration among all men who honored true bravery.

The picture was one that would never fade from the mind of Cuthbert—leaning up against one of the palisades Alexander Gregory seemed turned into stone, as he watched the spot where the lad had vanished, wringing his hands in the intensity of his anxiety—twice he made a spasmodic movement as though intending to hobble forward and plunge into that vortex of fierce flame himself; but each time a groan was forced from his lips when he discovered that his leg was really useless, the sprain being serious.

Cuthbert wished he knew of something that he could do to assist, but since the other had vanished there was no sign, and to simply follow after him would mean a triple tragedy, an altogether useless sacrifice.

Eli was at his elbow, and together they pushed as close to the burning walls as possible, eagerly scanning the windows above for the first sign of Owen, and meanwhile, shouting at some halfbreeds, who were staggering under the weight of a ladder which they had found close by, and guessed might be useful in some sort of an emergency.

Cuthbert held his breath.

He really had very little hope of ever seeing his new friend again, for there did not seem to be one chance in a dozen for any one to issue forth from that fiery furnace alive, since this was not the day of miracles.

It was like an age to him, though in all probability but a minute had really crept by since Owen vanished through the doorway; and yet during that interval the fire had gained more headway, despite all efforts of the gathered employes of the Hudson Bay Company to smother it with water, pumped through a hose, and by means of an old hand-engine kept against just such an emergency.

A hand gripped Cuthbert's arm, and turning his head quickly he found that it was Eli who had thus unconsciously caught hold of him—possibly the tremendous excitement had weakened the backwoods lad, so that he clutched at support; but he was staring upward toward one of the windows, as though some movement might have caught his attention there.

His campmate naturally enough cast his eyes in the same quarter, as if sudden hope had sprung into existence; but it was to see the flames shoot out of the window in a manner that must have utterly precluded the possibility of Owen making an exit there.

Cuthbert groaned aloud, filled with dismay—it was a horrible thought thus thrust upon his mind, for there is something unusually agonizing in a death by fire; and it seemed as though the last chance had gone when the demon of the flames thrust his grinning visage out of that window.

Then Eli gave vent to a sudden shout close to his ear, so that he heard what was said even above the frightful roar of the wind and crackle of flames:

"The roof—look up yonder over the eaves—hurra, he's got her—bully for Owen, I say!" was what Eli shrieked.

Wonderful to say, the brave Canadian lad had indeed pushed out through some sort of trap or scuttle in the sloping roof, the presence of which seemed to be unknown to him; and just as Eli had declared, he was carrying a little limp figure in his stout and willing arms, none other than his cousin Jessie, the darling of the old factor's heart.

Cuthbert was stricken dumb for the moment, it all seemed so like the hand of Providence directing things so that the wandering boy might come into his own.

Gregory gave out a cry that was more like a roar of exultation, for he had been down in the depths of despair, and the sight of his lissome lassie still in the land of the living acted like a spur upon him—he stretched out his arms in the direction of those upon the roof, and again endeavored to hasten toward them, only to fall over once more helpless upon the ground.

Then Cuthbert awoke to the fact that while his chum had done a bold thing, and for the moment cheated the flames of their intended sacrifice, he was not yet safe, for all around the flashing tongues of fire gathered for a last effort at accomplishing the dread work, so that the twain above seemed hemmed in.

So Cuthbert shouted to those who carried the hose, and forced them to turn the stream of water upon one spot where the fire was weakest; rushing at those who were staggering forward bearing the ladder, he seized hold of the blessed thing and urged them to raise it against the wall at that particular point.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

Eli was determined to be in the game, too, and while his chum was thus engaged in creating a chance for the escape of the two upon the roof, the boy from the timber region hustled several men forward, bearing armfuls of pelts that others had just drawn from the lower floor of the house—they were especially costly skins, and the lot might be worth a duke's ransom; but at the moment, with those two precious lives in peril, to the anxious factor they were as dross, and he would only too willingly have stood the loss of the whole kit could he by this means have saved the one so dear to his old heart.

With these Eli meant to fashion some sort of buffer, that would break the fall should the couple above find themselves compelled to jump; and it was a splendid scheme to be formed on the spur of that dreadful moment, one that Cuthbert never could forget, or cease to praise.

Meanwhile, he was pretty busily employed at his own affair, placing the ladder against the building, and directing those who had held the hose to keep the stream of water chasing up and down that particular quarter.

Owen could not see everything that was being tried; but he knew fairly well what they intended he should do, and once assured of the presence of the ladder he did not hesitate about using the same.

What if the fiery fingers did snatch after him as if furious at being cheated of their prey—the blessed stream of water, cold with the frosty breath of the approaching winter, showered about him, and saved them both from even a serious burn.

Cuthbert was waiting at the foot of the ladder, ready to spring up and render quick assistance if it was necessary; but Owen still remained in possession of his powers, and gripped the little girl securely in his arms.

It was as if a new life had suddenly opened up to the lonely lad—this one whom he had saved from the deadly gas and fire was his own kith and kin, daughter of his mother's sister; and the very touch of the girl's senseless form was able to send a thrill of exultation through him.

Cuthbert did not attempt to take the burden from him, for he understood just what it meant for Owen to bring the girl to her grandfather by himself; so he fell in behind, calling to the men to desist with their stream, to turn it upon the storehouse, while others gathered up the costly skins that had been thrown down with such good intent.

Alexander Gregory had struggled to his feet again—little did he heed the pains that accompanied his sprain, even though the misadventure crippled him for the time being, and rendered it difficult to stand without help; for his attention was wholly taken up with that still little form that Owen was hugging in his stalwart and affectionate arms.

Jessie had been almost smothered by the smoke; but her rescuer, knowing how perilous such a thing might be, had been careful to wrap something around her head, so that after that the atmosphere reached her less permeated by noxious gases; and when Owen gained the ground she had so far recovered as to struggle enough to free her head from this enveloping mantle, and make a movement as though desirous of being released.

But Owen, party overcome himself by the smoke he had taken into his lungs, did not fully understand, and staggering up to the old factor he held out his burden, gasping:

"Here she is, grandfather, safe and sound!"

Cuthbert held his breath, and then suddenly gave vent to a shout of joy; for just as he hoped, even if he did not wholly expect it to occur, the factor, wild with delight and thankfulness, simply stretched his arms and gathered into his embrace both girl and lad.

Owen was a wanderer no more; but had found his own in the heart of his grandsire. It was a splendid ending to the little forest drama, and Cuthbert was the happiest fellow on the face of the earth at that moment; for he had in the short time he had known Owen grown to feel very warmly toward the manly young Canadian, and nothing that could have happened to himself might have given him one-half the pleasure that this final scene did.

Eli was a demonstrative chap, and he just

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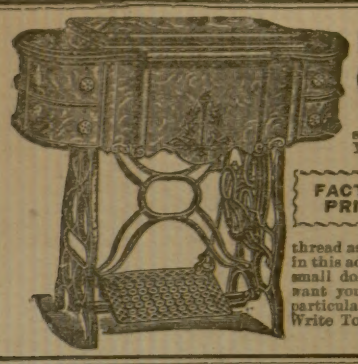

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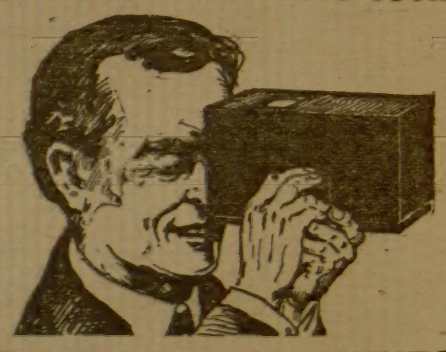

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squatted down on the spot and cried for very joy; while he did not know the satisfaction of a home himself, still he could rejoice over the fact that his friend had ceased to belong to the grand order of nomads.

There was still considerable to do, in order to keep the fire within bounds, for while the living quarters of the factor had gone too far to be saved, there remained other buildings, some containing stores of great value, and unless the employes of the company were smart the post would be practically wiped out.

So Cuthbert led them to the assault, and fought fire as valiantly as ever any member of an engine company in a crack tournament could have done in order that his town might win the grand prize offered.

The hose proved valuable enough; but only for the assistance of the wind possibly there might have been another story to tell when the fire finally ceased its mad antics through lack of fuel—it chanced that the breeze was blowing away from the other buildings, and while the stockade caught, it could be easily extinguished.

Of course the factor had met with quite a serious loss; but he seemed to care mighty little about this, since his precious darling had been spared; as far as the other things went they could be easily duplicated before the rigor of winter had fully settled down upon the Saskatchewan country, and he was well able to stand the penalty in dollars and cents.

Then there was the pride he took in the valiant rescue work of Owen; his eyes were continually turning toward the lad with a softened light in their depths, and it was evident that his heart had become exceedingly tender with respect to this wandering son of his daughter.

He several times called Owen to him to ask if he were certain that he had not receiver serious burns while within the blazing house; to Cuthbert it was plain that this was in part a subterfuge to have the other near him, since his sprained ankle prevented him from moving about.

When morning came he would have a heart-to-heart talk with the lad, and never again must there be a cloud allowed to rise between them—these three were all that were left of the family now, and they must stick together.

The factor told Cuthbert what might be done to insure them some degree of comfort during the remainder of the night, and with the assistance of the other lads he saw that it was carried out.

An hour later the excitement had all died away; the spot where the house of the factor had stood only contained a pile of ruins, still smouldering, with an occasional tongue of fire shooting upward; but ere dawn this was fully extinguished by a fall of rain.

They never fully settled how the fire had caught; it may have been an accident, but there were those who believed that Stackpole or his pard Dubois had something to do with the disaster; but as they made sure to religiously avoid that section afterward it was never brought home to them.

Mr. Gregory was well enough inside of a week to accompany the boys down the big Saskatchewan to the nearest town where he could obtain those supplies which were needed to replace what the fire had devoured; they had a fine time of it swinging along with a couple of great batteaus, manned by the French-Canadian voyaguers, who sang their boat songs as they rowed, and made things merry around the fire at night time.

Cuthbert and Eli hated to part from the chum who had so quickly won his way to their hearts, and they readily promised to come back again to this charming country, when another year rolled around—Eli had his mind set upon working that copper mine, and Cuthbert had promised to see that the necessary capital was secured with which to provide all the paraphernalia such as is used to advantage—if his chum was of the same mind after he had roamed around the world with him.

Owen's little cousin had accompanied grandpa to town, since a "woman's judgment" was considered essential in choosing some of the household effects; and the last glimpse our twain had of dear old Owen, the erstwhile lad, was standing with his arm about Jessie, while the proud factor beamed upon them both, and waved his hat with just as much enthusiasm as the youngsters.

So Cuthbert after all had found much pleasure in the great Saskatchewan region, even though he failed to map out a new route to Alaska, or learn any of the wonderful secrets hidden in the wide stretches of barrens between the country of the Crees and the Chippewas, and the lonely Hudson Bay.

Many times would his memory go back to the scenes that embraced Owen, the stern old factor, and sweet little Jessie; and again he would live over those days and nights when they were "Canoemates in Canada."

The end.

Strain.

Henderson—Doesn't your wife find the telephone a great convenience?

Henpeck—Yes. But she doesn't like it half as much as she thought she would. You see, when she's using it she has to listen half the time.

MANFRED'S DIPLOMACY.

John Manfred regarded with hopeless despair the trembling, colorless little woman who sat in a chair at one side of the stage.

"I won't take that Willing woman," he said decidedly. "Send her over to Judson; he needs some extras."

"Can't be done," declared Bayes. "She stays with this show."

"Much good it will do," grunted Manfred. "Are you running an annex to a dramatic school that you take a girl like that when Amy Crostic was born and brought up just to play this part?"

"I don't care if the whole world was created so that the Crostic girl could play this part," said Bayes hotly.

"Look here, Manfred," he added more conciliatingly. "This kid is the protege of Tim Cullian. Her father is one of the big wheels in the machine and Tim says she must have her chance. There are sixty-four different violations against the Momus theater. The lease runs out in May. If we make the repairs the building department wants it will cost $40,000. If we don't make the changes we'll have to close the house and lose the $50,000 rent we shall have to pay whether we are open or not. If this girl plays Naida we save that $40,000. Cullian will see to that. Is she a good actress? I should say that she was."

Bayes turned away with the air of a person who is done, and Manfred swallowed hard to keep down the protests that were futile.

The role of Naida was only a "bit;" a dozen speeches in the first act and an occasional remark in the later acts, but her one scene in the early part of the first act was the one which gave the keynote, and, bungingly played, it would hurt the entire performance.

Because Cullian was a power, and only through a powerful pull could Bayes keep a condemned theater open through the remainder of its brief lease of life, "The Contest." Manfred's first produced play, was to be made a sacrifice.

Manfred—famous as a stage manager—had worked for years on the play. At a trial week in the early spring Amy Crostic had seemed to realize the part of Naida to perfection. Now the play was to be spoiled for the season by this weak and colorless amateur.

There was a look of determination on Manfred's face as he called the company to order. With the exception of Loretta Willing, the girl with a pull, the company had been engaged in the trial performance, and there was no necessity for reading the play, so after a brief explanation to Loretta as to what her part was, they plunged at once into rehearsal.

It was a hard time for the girl. Manfred made her play her one scene over and over again, criticising her inflection, her gestures, her understanding of the role, finally winding up by declaring that he would have Miss Crostic present in the morning to show how the part should be played.

It was with tired limbs and tearful eyes that Loretta dragged herself down the steep stairs leading from the dingy rehearsal hall. Ben Kilmer was waiting for her at the doorway, and Manfred, emerging from the doorway as they turned the corner, smiled to himself. Diplomacy might avail where argument could not.

Before rehearsal was called in the morning, he sought Loretta out and in a more kindly tone than he had yet employed in speaking to her suggested that her escort might be saved some embarrassment by coming to the hall for her, instead of waiting downstairs.

Loretta smiled her thanks for the suggestion and interpreted his permission so liberally that she brought Kilmer back from lunch with her.

The other members of the company looked for an explosion from the martinet stage manager, but none came. He beamed affably upon the unsuspecting Kilmer, and then sought diligently to prove how little of an actress Loretta was.

Manfred knew of old the value of a good looking and eligible young man as a hindrance to a stage career, and if Kilmer wished to argue Loretta off the stage and into matrimony Manfred was rejoiced to provide the argument, even though in doing so he violated his rule against the introduction of the outsider at rehearsals.

Eagerly Manfred watched the progress of the game. He managed to convey to Kilmer the impression that his severity was in aid of Kilmer's hopes and though Kilmer at times longed to thrash him, he could not very well interfere with the man who was trying to do him a service.

It was not until the last rehearsal that Kilmer was able to report success.

"I've won out," he declared happily on one of the brief resting spells. "It's been a tough game, but Loretta has promised that she will marry me after the first performance. You can take Miss Crostic along to step into the part, but Loretta wants to play it just once."

"That will be all right," agreed Manfred cheerfully. "I'll notify Miss Crostic to come along. Why don't you come too?"

"I'm coming," explained Kilmer. "Loretta wanted me to come and see that she could play the part."

Manfred turned away to conceal a smile. It would be an exhibition beyond question. It was pitiful that the girl should suppose that she could act after her rehearsal experience, but the first week was to be spent in one-night stands for the purpose of getting the company in trim for the city opening, so it would not matter.

When the train went out carrying "The Contest" company both Kilmer and Miss Crostic were aboard. Loretta thrilled with excitement at the thought that her brief stage career was starting and she seemed to lose some of the nervousness that was her great fault.

At rehearsal she was as bad as ever, but in the evening she was quite another person. Manfred, standing in the entrance by the curtain arch, stared in amazement at the little "Naida," who ran upon the stage just after the curtain rose.

The cold, colorless personality had taken on the mask of the character. The girl was dazzlingly pretty and she carried the scene with a force and verve that brought a round of applause on her exit.

Bayes hurried back from the front of the house and approached the stage manager.

"The kid has fooled us all!" he cried delightedly. "She was a 'bad rehearser,' that's all. She needs the excitement of the audience to get her out of her trance, but she makes little Crostic look like a stick."

"I know it," groaned Manfred. "I'd give $100 to have her play the first night in town—but she'll be on her honeymoon."

"She'll stay; she'll have to after this. Go and talk to her in the intermission."

Manfred talked—through the intermission and halfway through the next act. He even left the stage to run itself—and went out to argue with Kilmer.

It was all of no avail. Kilmer announced that they had been married that afternoon and were determined to go on their honeymoon.

* * * * *

The train with the company was about to pull out and Loretta was saying good-by to her friends of a few weeks. Kilmer wrung Manfred's hand.

"I never can tell you how much obliged I am," he said as the cry of "All Aboard!" rang out. "Both Loretta and I are grateful to you."

"You're welcome," said Manfred grimly, but as the train pulled out and left the star of a night standing on the platform he cursed the diplomacy that had cost him so dear and Bayes, standing by, murmured softly, "I told you so"—which is cold comfort for a diplomat.

Where the Women Propose.

In New Guinea, an island in the Pacific, it is leap year all the time in one important sense, for out there all the proposals of marriage are made by the women. It is considered beneath the dignity of the male inhabitants of New Guinea to even notice a woman, and consequently the women perforce must notice the men, and force their fancy to "lightly turn to thoughts of love."

So when the belle of New Guinea feels a strange thrilling in her maiden heart, she promptly sends a piece of string to the sister of the lucky man. If he has no sister, she sends it to his mother, or, anyhow, to some female relative. This, because the man and his male relatives are assumed to be above taking any steps toward acquiring a wife.

Then the sister says to the man involved: "Brother, I have news; so-and-so is in love with you." If inclined to matrimony the man makes an engagement to meet the enamored lady. When they meet it is alone, and they either decide to wed or drop the entire proposition at once. There is no courting, for the man is not allowed, theoretically, at least, to waste any time on a woman—not even enough to allow her to make love to him.

The betrothal is quickly announced, and the engaged man in New Guinea is branded on the back with charcoal, but the woman's mark of engagement to wed is actally cut into her skin, and is never allowed to completely vanish. If either is inclined to break the engagement, nothing can be done by the offended party.

If the girl changes her mind, and decides that, after all, she sent the little piece of string by mistake, the man is apt, however, to catch her sometime alone and thrash her. If the man jilts the woman, her relatives often hunt him up and administer a sound drubbing.

His Vacation.

A thoughtful-looking little man, with a prominent Adam's apple and spectacles and a bunch of railway folders under one wing, entered the office of a steamship agency and asked to see a folder and time table of the Uganda Railway, which runs down into South Africa.

"We have no folders here now, but I can send and get one for you. Do you have to have it right away?"

"Oh, I suppose I can wait," replied the thoughtful-looking man. "I saw a poster in your window one day about that route and I wanted to study the time table while I'm planning my vacation."

The clerk began to sit up. There was a man worth talking to. "You're really thinking of running over to Africa for your vacation?" he asked.

The man grinned back sheepishly. "Not exactly," he said, "but every year when I plan my vacation I get together all the folders I can. I've got a bunch of 'em here covering pretty much everything from the Rocky Mountain resorts to the places on the Jersey Coast, and I thought that Uganda road would be a nice little diversion after reading about the Seattle fair and Georgian Bay. I suppose when it comes right down to it my wife and I'll run over to Cedar Point for a few days. Oh, don't go to any trouble. I'd like to have that Uganda time table, but if you haven't got it, I suppose I can plan my vacation without it." And with another grin he trailed out.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Antiquity of Canned Fruits.

There are many conveniences of the present day which were denied to the ancients. Still they enjoyed some luxuries which the people of this age deem comparative novelties. For instance, a vast number of people suppose that the canning of fruits, an industry which of late years has attained so vast an importance, is of recent growth; but, as a matter of fact, we are indebted to Pompeii for it. Years ago when the excavations were just beginning, a party of Americans found in what had been the pantry of a house many jars of preserved figs. One was opened, and they were found to be fresh and good.

Investigation showed that the figs had been put into jars in a heated state, an aperture left for the steam to escape, and then sealed with wax. The hint was taken, and the next year the preserving of fruit in tins was introduced into America, the process being identical with that in vogue in Pompeii twenty centuries ago. Those who eat them do not realise that they are indebted for this art to a people who were literally ashes before the dawn of the Christian era.

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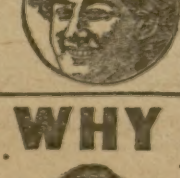

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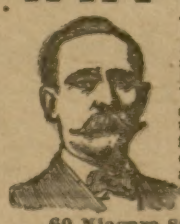

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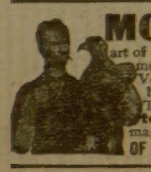

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THE BOY WHO SMILED.

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They liked to see him come their way—
The boy who smiled.
He put a brightness in their day
Which Care beguiled;
For God had given him this grace,
To have a sweetness in his face,
A radiance mild.
So where he went, went sunshine, too,
Because he smiled
With happiness and courage new
That reconciled
Sad hearts which fainted 'neath their load
Until they passed upon the road
The happy child.

THE LITTLE OUTCAST.

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father."

Christmas Eve had come again, and happy little faces were at the windows and bright eyes were peering anxiously out into the twilight, waiting for the deeper shades of evening; for beautiful Christmas trees, glittering with bonbons and laden with rare and wonderful gifts, were shut up in back parlors and libraries, and mysterious packages had been arriving all day and had been carefully deposited in the closed rooms, while the children were kept in the nursery, with the promise of a visit from good old Santa Claus in the evening.

The streets were thronged with lively, busy people. Papas were hastening home with arms and pockets overflowing with bundles; errand-boys were running to and fro; sleighs were dashing along with sounds of bells and merry voices vibrating on the frosty air. Mirth and music, laughter and song, proclaimed that Christmas, dear Christmas, bountiful, generous, kind old Christmas, was about to pay the world his annual visit.

But were there only happy hearts in the great city on this blessed Christmas Eve? Ah, no; the bright moon and the brilliant stars looked down on many wretched homes, where little children had not even bread to satisfy their hunger, nor fire to keep them warm; and it was not to be a Merry Christmas to them, but just like the other days, with their pinching poverty in their wretched homes.

Slowly wending his way through the gaslit streets was a little boy not more than eight years old. Only a few tattered garments covered his shivering limbs; his face was pale and thin, and his great blue eyes had a weary, pleading look. But people were too happy or too busy to give a thought to the little ragged boy, who sometimes asked a penny of the passer-by or stopped at a basement door to beg for food. But cook, too intent upon her ices and jellies to listen to beggars, rudely thrust him out, and so the little fellow wandered on, standing sometimes for a moment to gaze in a window where the curtain had been left aside, to look at the beautifully dressed children, and the scene in the richly furnished room seemed to the little outcast like a glimpse into fairyland. And wondering why he was shut from all this happiness with a sigh that was half a sob, he wandered on again, for nobody missed him.

He was an orphan, and was sent out every morning to beg for the food which kept him from starving. On and on he went slowly and more slowly, feeling faint, hungry and tired. Presently he came to a quiet street where the stores were all closed, and, creeping in behind a great box, he lay down on the cold walk; but it seemed so nice to rest he did not mind the cold any more, and soon he fell asleep and dreamed—such a happy dream. He was lying on his own little white-draped bed in the cottage that had once been his home. The fragrance of the June roses which clambered over the windows was wafted in by the soft summer breeze. He heard music—such heavenly music—and his dear mother, who had died, glided softly in and took her little tired boy in her arms and kissed him and rocked him to sleep, just as he remembered she had done when he was a very little child.

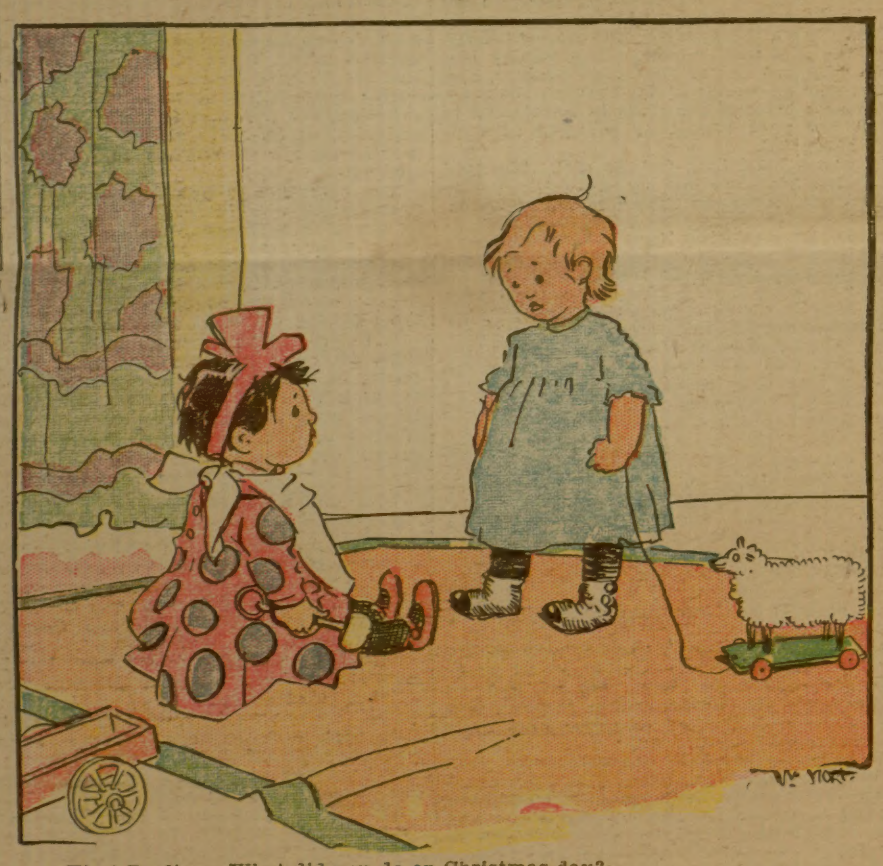
The night grew bitter cold, sleighriders and foot-travelers were safely and snugly at home; the lights on the Christmas trees had burned down, parlors were darkened, happy hearts were wrapped in happy dreams, and wretched ones for a few brief hours forgot their wretchedness. Only the moon and stars peeped in behind the box where lay the little, cold, white face with its radiant smile.

Christmas morning dawned cold and clear. The bells were ringing merrily, merrily, "Merry Christmas!" "Merry Christmas!" The children shouted it, the bells caught up the sound which echoed and re-echoed on the frosty air. Happy-looking parents, and rosy, bright-faced children are on their way to church to spend an hour, and then home again to feasting and merriment.

But what is this coming? Something borne on a litter, with a troop of boys on either side. What can it be? Oh, only a little beggar, found frozen on the street this morning. The mirthful voices are hushed for a moment, and the kind little hearts are sorry they could not have done something for the little beggar boy, but it is too late, and he is soon forgotten in the sumptuous dinner and the merry games that fill the short afternoon brim full of fun and happiness.

Little, despised, neglected outcast of yesterday! Angel today! Who can tell how far the joys of your Christmas exceed those of the most petted child of luxury, for "I say unto you, that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father."

THE JOYS OF CHRISTMAS.



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Second Darling—I sucked the paint off a red horse.
First Darling—I swallowed a cent and a handful of sawdust.

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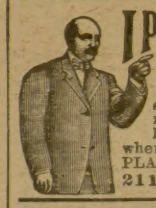

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